

# CYCLE SPORT

MAGAZINE

## Esteban **CHAVES**

How far can 'Chavito' go?

Exclusive

**Dan Martin**

Hungry for  
wins on Flemish  
Superteam

**Winter  
Training**

Can a pro  
afford to take  
any time off?

**PLUS!**

**Geraint  
THOMAS**

**Graeme  
OBREE**

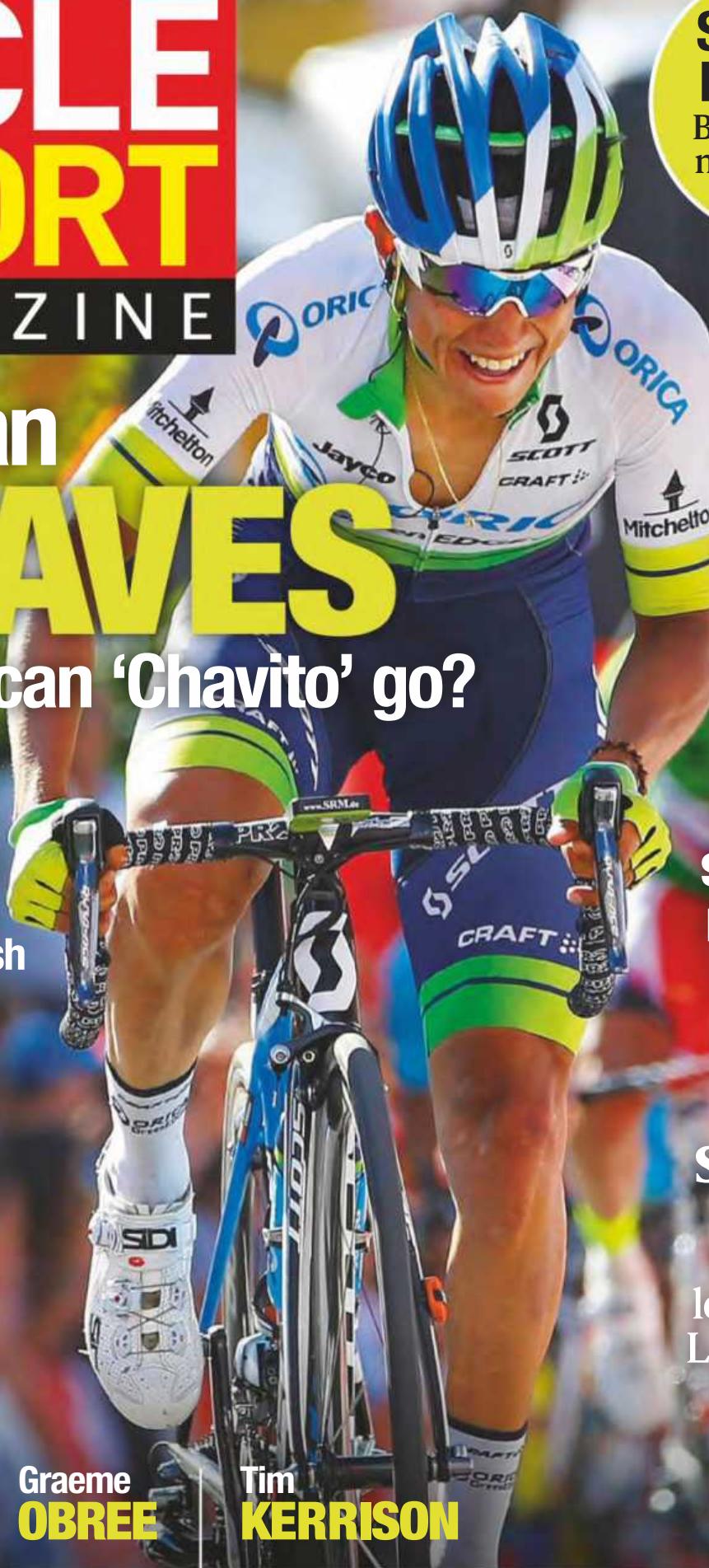
**Tim  
KERRISON**

**SEASON  
REVIEW**  
Best & Worst  
moments of  
the year

**2015  
pro  
season  
results  
in full**

History

**Six-Day  
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From the  
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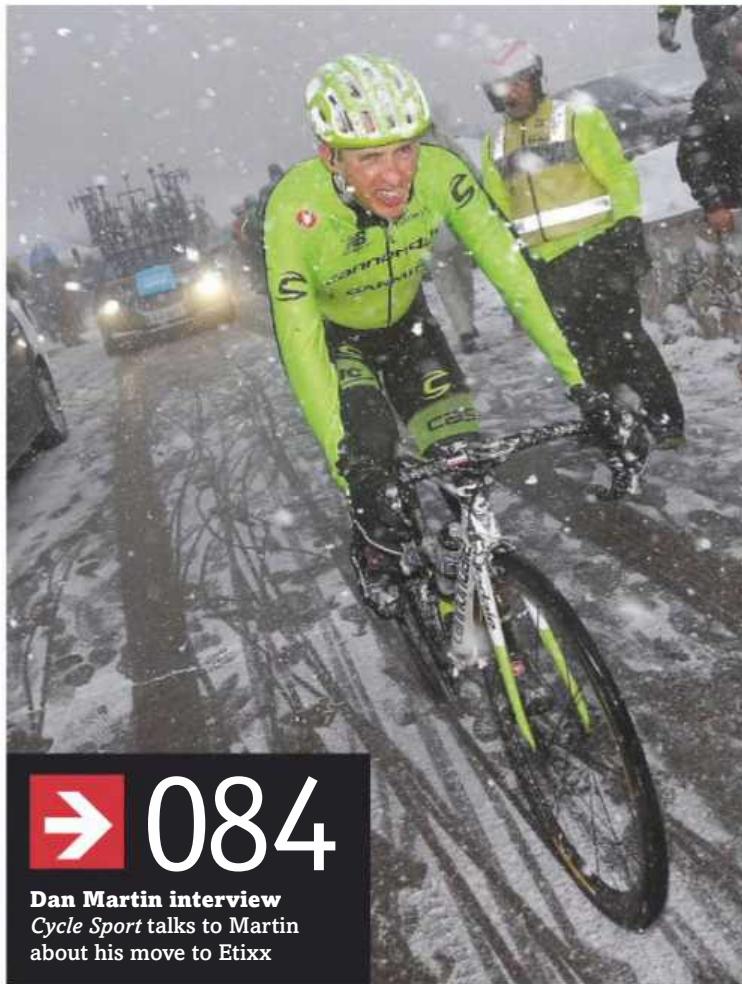
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# January 2016

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**THE EDITOR** Luke Edwardes-Evans

# King of sports

We've had a lot of fun putting together this issue of *Cycle Sport* which you will see has one or two changes, including a revised front end allowing us to add even more interviews and features into the magazine. We hope you like the new back page too. It's about the rebels of pro cycling.

Stepping into the regular team is Kenny Pryde, our new editor-at-large and one of the most experienced cycling journalists on the scene today. Kenny will be on the road every month bringing you

stories that you won't read anywhere else.

Behind the scenes, insightful interviews, jaw dropping photography, the nitty gritty of the real lives of professional cyclists, that's what we are about at *Cycle Sport*. And we have the reporting team to put the thrills and spills from the king of sports directly into your hands every month. Sit back and enjoy the show with us.

Luke

**CYCLE  
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MAGAZINE**

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**Distribution:** Marketforce 020 3148 3300

**Back numbers:** John Denton Services 01733 370 800 **Newsgagent hotline:** If you have any problems getting *Cycle Sport* from your local newsgagent please phone 020 7261 7704. **International licence enquiries:** Richard Benge +44 20 7261 7715, fax +44 20 7261 6304.

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US Postmaster: Send address changes to Cycle Sport, Air Business Ltd, c/o Worldwide Shipping Inc., 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA.

Subscription records are maintained at Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0SU, UK.

Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent.

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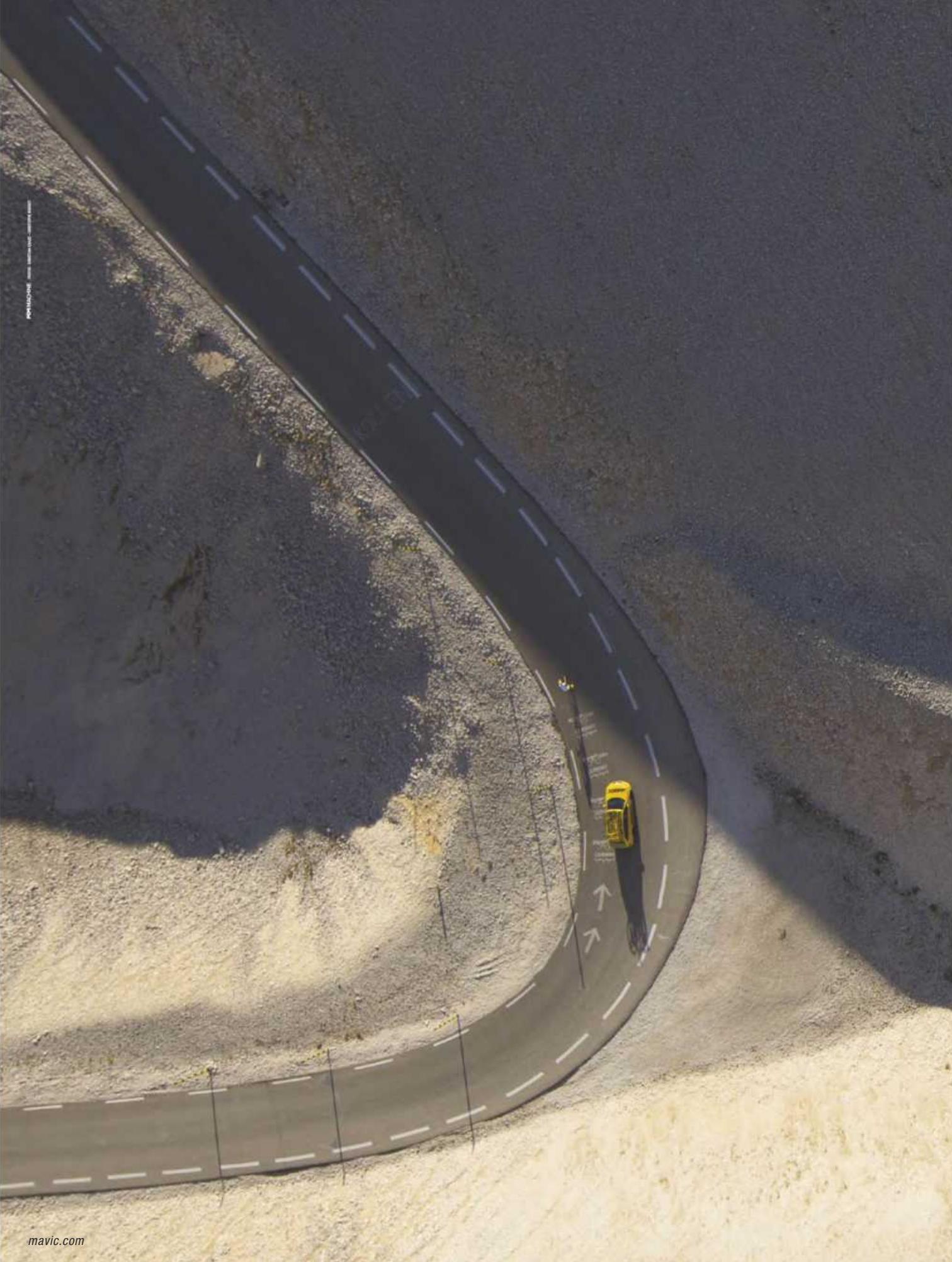


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## JAPAN CUP

The shot...

Late season win for Trek's  
Bauke Mollema from Diego  
Ulissi and Yukiya Arashiro  
Photo: Yuzuru Sunada



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The shot...

## EUROPEAN TRACK CHAMPS

GB women's team pursuiters  
catch Poland in round one en  
route to gold in the series final  
Photo: Graham Watson





## RUDDERVOORDE SUPER PRESTIGE

The shot...

Opposite: race winner Kevin Pauwels. This page: Lars van der Haar was sixth  
Photo: Graham Watson



## SAITAMA CRIT, JAPAN

Focus on...

Special Guest Star Chris Froome rocks the yellow jersey in Japan. Degenkolb won  
Photo: Yuzuru Sunada



# 10 THINGS...

## THAT ROCKED PRO CYCLING THIS MONTH

### 1 Running joke

Maybe we didn't learn so much as have it confirmed that wherever there is loads of money, then there is almost always lots of corruption. Senior management at the world athletics federation arrested by French police over corruption and extortion? Now that's what we'd call 'unfit for purpose.'

### 3 Free the data!

#### Tour winner

Chris Froome, endlessly accused and suspected of doping by Twittering hordes, is to release his performance data — independently gathered and verified — for us to interpret. And that will put an end to accusations one way or the other. Will the haters be so easily appeased? We doubt it.

### 4 Pro-Conti OK, yeah?

While we inevitably focus on the World Tour teams, the pro peloton has a far more pragmatic approach. How else to interpret Mark Cavendish and his henchmen's move to South African team Dimension-Qhubeka? Or Chris Anker Sorensen's move to Fortuneo (ex-Bretagne Séché) or Sylvain Chavanel's shift from IAM to the re-branded Europcar squad, Direct Energie?

Words Kenny Pryde Photos Graham Watson, Yuzuru Sunada

### 2 Japanese fans are unique

With scenes of wild, unreserved enthusiasm (by Japanese standards) for the Japan Cup criterium and Utsonomiya race — not to mention the Saitama criterium — a new batch of euro riders visits every year and are turned into manga characters. There are fan clubs and then there are Japanese fan clubs...



### 5 Cav's figure

When push came to shove, it took Deloitte's money and input to get Mark Cavendish to sign with Dimension-Qhubeka. Deloitte already worked with Dimension data, saw the possibilities and wanted a slice of the action. Without Deloitte, there would have been no Cav. Or Bernie Eisel or Mark Renshaw.





## 6 Lance comeback pt5

The buzz around Stephen Frears's film 'The Program' suggests that the world isn't ready to let Lance Armstrong fade into the background yet. A PR and press junket 'blitz' allied to radio and chat show appearances by actors and journalist David Walsh mean LA isn't quitting the headlines yet. Everyone wants to recoup their money!



## 9 'Don't stop, believin'

US rider Phil Gaimon was 27 when he first signed a contract to ride with Garmin back in 2014. He lost his Cannondale-Garmin slot for 2015 and rode for Optum Kelly Benefit, but has been re-signed by Jonathan Vaughters Crazy Gang for 2016. If you want something badly enough, clearly, don't stop believing.

## 7

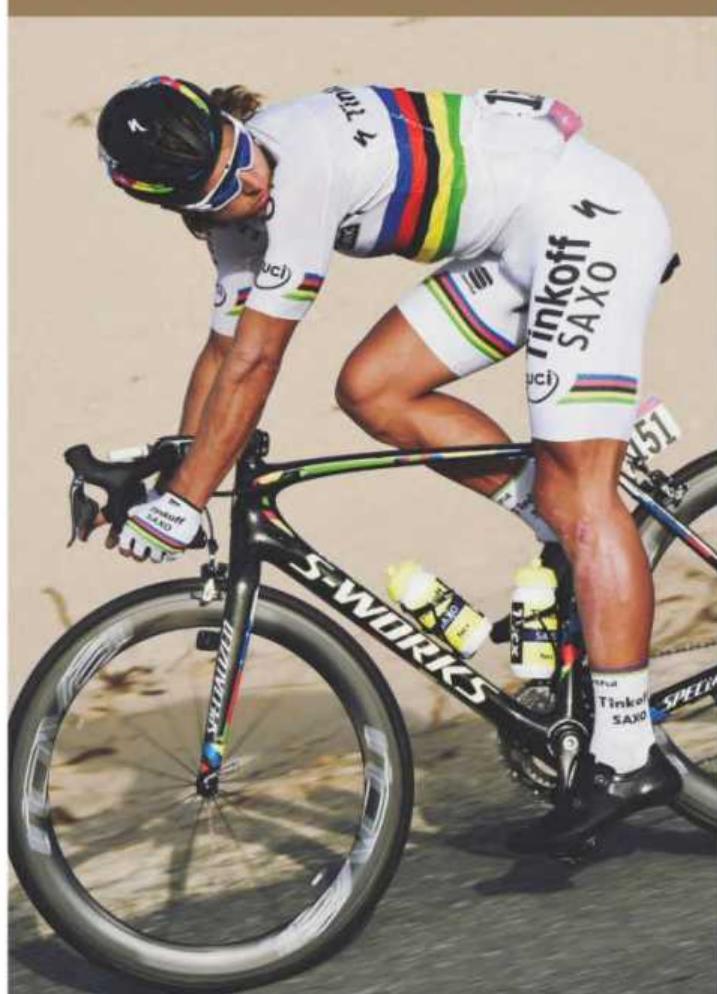
### Miguel still winning

Erstwhile cross-country mountain bike rival of Cadel Evans in the good old, bad old days, a rider with a chequered road career, Miguel Martinez is still racing and winning off road. Martinez and 2011 Tour de France winner Evans first raced each other back in 1994, though Martinez's road career was rather less illustrious than Evans's.

## 8

### Oi Sagan, no!

When it comes to the world road race champion's rainbow jersey — surely the best jersey in any sport anywhere — not even Peter Sagan can pull off the all-white jersey and shorts ensemble. White shorts are an abomination. The UCI should forget every other issue in the sport — this is the dirty, big, obvious one.



## 10

### 'Life ain't nothin' but bitches and money'

Who knew NWA and Ice Cube had such a deep understanding of cycling economics? The Saitama criterium in Japan, organised by Tour de France outfit ASO, obviously pays riders appearance money. Our sources say prices range from 5,000 euros up to 25,000 euros per rider. And each star is flown business-class with their partner. "That's the key to get them to come," said our mole, "invite the wives."



## THE BIG STORY Kenny Pryde, editor-at-large

Athletics' scandal of covered-up drugs tests and state-backed doping programmes makes cycling look almost saintly. Don't get too complacent, argues **Kenny Pryde**

# We're not the villains, for now

**T**here can't have been too many cycling fans who didn't smile knowingly when the World Anti-Doping Agency-instigated an independent inquiry into the Russian athletics doping scandal widely reported across the world's media last month.

Former head of WADA Dick Pound fielded questions from journalists globally following the publication of a 325-page report, the result of a 10-month investigation into allegations of doping and corruption in Russian athletics.

Predictably enough, the report spread beyond Russia's borders and reached as far as top management at the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF).

It made the recent travails of cycling look modest in comparison. Far from negligible, but cycling's governing body turned out to be a model of propriety in comparison to elements within the IAAF. Following on from the ongoing corruption investigation into football's world governing body FIFA, cycling looked like an oasis of probity, reason and transparency. Satisfied smirking aside, we can't afford to be smug though.

### Walk-on part

In the end, there's precious little that cycling or the UCI can 'teach' either FIFA or the IAAF because in comparison to those two organisations and the sports they run, pro cycling is a mere cottage industry.

Consider that the annual wage bill from English Premiership football alone could bankroll every single World Tour team and you get an idea of how insignificant cycling is in financial terms.

And where there's big money, there is corruption, cheating and fraud. Games are rigged and sold. Ask the Libor traders. Maybe we should be happy that cycling does not operate at those financial levels with their attendant temptations.

### Not criminals

And while it may not be popular to say it, but after the years of accusations that were made against former UCI presidents Hein Verbruggen and Pat McQuaid, neither ended up being arrested by US or French police (which we're sure came as a disappointment to some observers).

The Cycling Independent Report Commission, given access



**"Neither UCI presidents ended up being arrested"**

*UCI is not IAAF*

to documents and digital records to investigate possible fraud, corruption and positive test cover-ups, came up with nothing to support those allegations. That cycling's EPO and modern blood doping era could have been handled better is certainly true — though it's easy to say that in hindsight.

None of which puts cycling in a position of greater knowledge or authority. Every sport, its governance, philosophy, finances and national federations are unique and shaped by decades of cultural practices and procedures so to lump all athletics together and talk about 'lessons athletics can learn' is next to pointless. Enjoying a big slice of schadenfreude with your coffee as you peruse the independent report on Russia's doped runners and the IAAF is about as much as we should allow ourselves.

Lance Armstrong's confession on Oprah. Knocked off top spot by Russian state backed doping programme?



### Dirty lab rats

Arguably, the most worrying aspect of the saga was that, once again, it took whistle-blowing athletes (and investigative journalists) to help uncover the ugly truth of what was going on.

We can point to developments in anti-doping technology and detection to reassure ourselves that we are witnessing cleaner racing, but if we can't trust labs and national anti-doping agencies, we are all in trouble.

The key to cleaner sport is therefore surely to encourage an anti-doping culture inside cycling, at every level from sportives to amateur racing and of course, elite and pro.

Attitudes and behavioural shifts require time to take hold and we all need to do our part.

So, in short, drugs are bad, m'kay? Spread the word.

END

Verbruggen and McQuaid (right)



# Cervelo S5

## Pro road bike at Abu Dhabi Tour

Team MTN-Qhubeka's Cervelo S5 is the African team's super aero road bike. Daniel Teklehaimanot may have been riding his S5 for the last time this year but it still looks like a race winner

**C**ervelo came early to the aero road bike party and 15 years after the launch of their first aero bike, the Soloist, the S5 pro bike showcases the Canadian outfit's still radical vision of the low-drag racer.

Eritrean Daniel Teklehaimanot made history this year when he won the climber's prize at the Dauphine Libere and had a spell in the polka dot climber's jersey at the Tour de France.

For the Abu Dhabi race, which was flat apart from the queen stage to the summit of Jebel Hafeet, the S5 was the default choice as the peloton crawled through the intense heat in the dunes of the UAE's Empty Quarter.

Not surprisingly in the last major race on the 2015 calendar, the battle-hardened standard S5 was more than up to the job. This is not the time of year to reveal prototype parts or one-off special paint jobs (unless you are P. Sagan).

Prepped with Shimano Dura-Ace Di2 components, Rotor cranks and Enve wheels, it's a pro level machine that could be specced, at a price, from your local race bike shop.

**THE RIDER:**  
Daniel  
Teklehaimanot  
**Age:** 28  
**Height:** 1.88m  
**Weight:** 71kg





### SPECIFICATION

**Frameset:** Cervélo S5  
**Gears:** Shimano Dura-Ace Di2  
**Brakes:** Shimano Dura-Ace  
**Chainset:** Rotor  
**Wheels:** Enve  
**Tyres:** Schwalbe  
**Handlebar:** 3T  
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**Saddle:** Selle Royale  
**Seatpost:** Cervélo

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## Graham Watson Life through a lens

A race-snapping legend with more than 30 years on the scene and over 20 books on pro cycling. Check his latest shots at [grahamwatson.com](http://grahamwatson.com)

# Looking back at another season

**E**ven from afar, the re-launch of the London six-day event was too nostalgic to ignore. It was in the 1980 London event — called the Skol 6 back then — that I got my first high-pressure assignment with *Cycling*, after their staff photographer became ill.

Basically, all the images of that popular event would come from me, a rookie still clicking his way into the business and very nervous of my editor's expectations. I found the Madison races mesmerising, with the speeds and skills that men like Patrick Sercu and Danny Clarke displayed each night.

That event also had home-grown talent like Mick Bennett and Tony Doyle, as well as Australia's Gary Wiggins, racing literally to feed his recently-born son Bradley.

I remember being scared silly when I first stepped out onto the apron of the track to do my work, and kept myself pressed firmly against the inner wall as the cyclists sped past, just inches from my face.

Well, I passed my proficiency test, and used the week to cajole race-director Peter Post into letting me into other six-day races in Belgium, Holland and Germany, allowing my career to prosper. The new London six deserves every chance to succeed, and I wonder if any rookie photographers made their first steps like I once did?

### Hard as nails

I was so pleased to see Matthew Hayman sign up for another few years at Orica-Green Edge, for his kind are few and far between in this age of sport science and robotic tactics. I've photographed Matt for 12 of his 15 professional years, and my images show him winning, crashing, chasing, pacing, laughing and crying — in no particular order.

Hayman was one of dozens to fall flat on their faces on the famous Kemmelberg

incident in 2007, and this same man rode across the finish-line of a Tour Down Under stage in 2008, his collar-bone snapped in two after an argy-bargy sprint — but no ambulance for this hard-as-nails athlete.

Hayman is an utter gentleman off the bike, a go-to man if you need advice or to enrich oneself with his cycling wisdom.

As a Dutch/English/German speaker, he's a true boss of the peloton and often solves disputes or fixes inter-team collaborations along the way.

His role at GE is a blend of all these assets, with a newer role as a father figure to Esteban Chaves, a toddler in terms of experience and physically half the size of Hayman. I'm hoping he'll teach little Chaves how to perform a wheelie, but only for me, just like Matthew has often done.

### Wacky idea

Being in New Zealand in October meant

watching the rugby World Cup on TV alongside the delighted locals. What a team the All Blacks are!

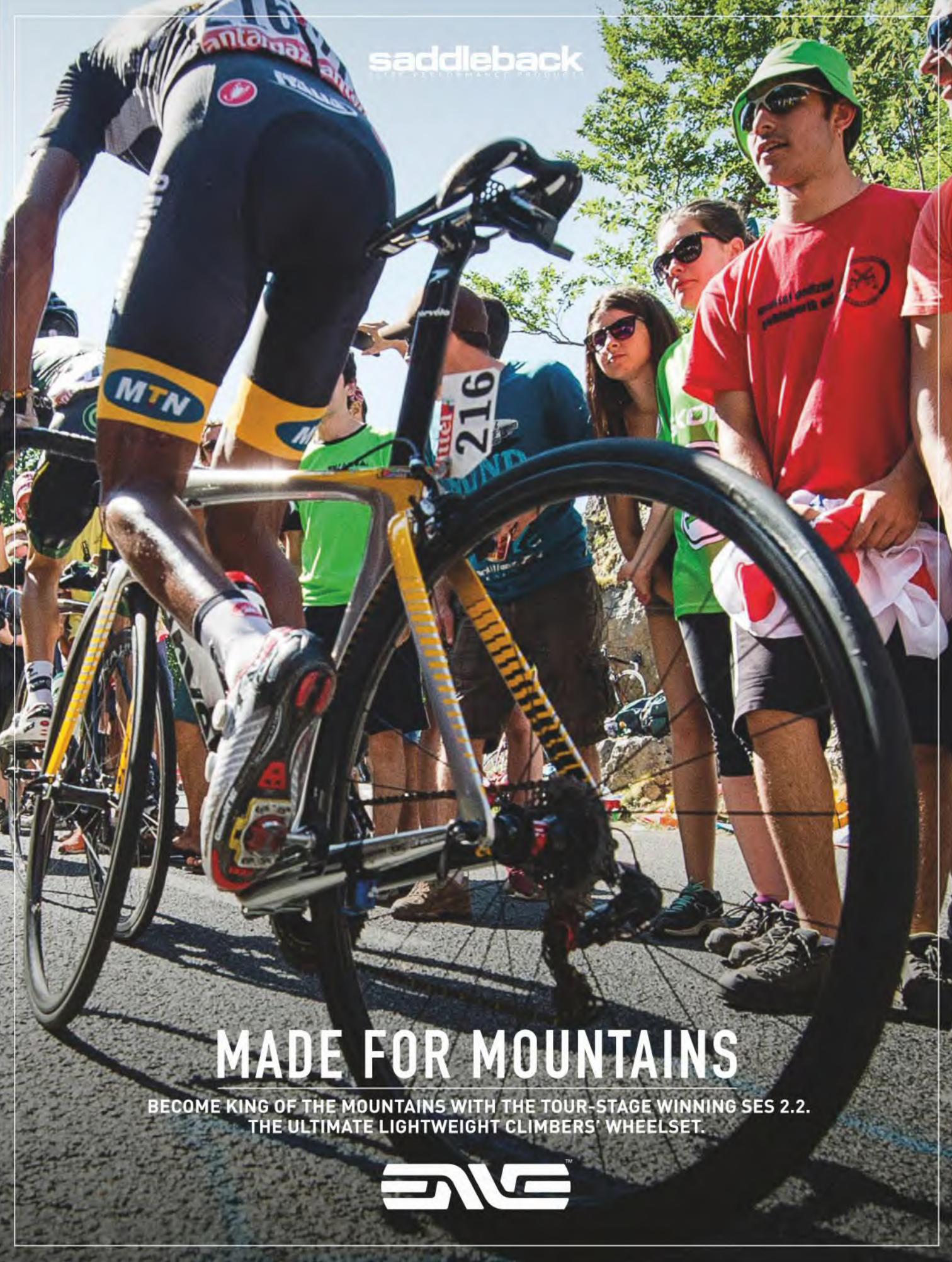
Then I got to wonder what would happen if cycling changed its age-old structure and allowed impact substitutes? Why not? After all, if Sonny Bill Williams can come on at half-time and make some game-changing passes or tackles, then what would it be like if a top cyclist came on halfway through a Grand Tour and stirred the pot a little?

We know the Giro, Tour and Vuelta pelotons always shrink from 198 to about 150 by the end, after illnesses, crashes, and natural fatigue have taken their toll.

Surely, there's a point to be had by allowing replacements in order to maintain a full peloton and add a touch of spice to the racing? Rules would have to be made — a substitute could not qualify for a GC placing. But challenging for a stage-win is allowed.

Imagine a team like Sky starting the 





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**Filippo Pozzato:**  
bit of a showman

**“Pozzato just loves to race”**

*Pippo’ rides on*

Tour with nine riders and Chris Froome as leader. Froome then gets ill, or crashes out.

What happens next? Simple, Sky switches to a sprinter-led team and brings on substitutes to allow this to happen. Such a move would change the whole dynamics of the sport and therefore is unlikely to happen. But why not give it a try?

#### **Pablo and Jimmy**

As 2015 comes to an end it’s also time to say a goodbye to two un-heralded cyclists, two of my favourites in Pablo Lastras and Jimmy Engoulvent.

Lastras is not really un-heralded — as a stage-winner in the Giro, Tour and Vuelta, he is hardly that — but in recent years he’s dropped well off the winner’s pace and become a solid team-worker instead.

Sadly, crashes have become a too-regular occurrence, and the wafer-thin physique of this genteel Spaniard has called time after a massive 17 years. If I remember his Grand Tour stage-wins, I also remember the day he started a stage of the Giro with a copy of *La Gazzetta dello Sport* still in his jersey pockets — he’d been reading it before the start and forgotten all about it! It’s good to see Lastras honoured as Retirement of the Year in our

Review of the Year feature which starts on page 44 this month.

Engoulvent is a bulldog of a Frenchman on a bicycle but a true Gallic gentleman off duty. Built more like a rugby player, Engoulvent somehow managed to win four prologue time trials at the Tour of Luxembourg — all of them uphill and on cobbles!

This powerhouse has been in as many escapes as Jens Voigt, albeit without the glory, but seems to have spent most of his recent years chasing to get back-on — and shouting and cursing at us when we’ve refused to give him shelter behind the moto. He’d always apologise afterwards though.

#### **Alberto’s Vuelta**

The announcement of the 2016 Tour route has encouraged the usual amount of comment and speculation. Top of the chatter-charts is that Alberto Contador will only ride this one grand tour in 2016 — and he’ll be riding to win of course.

The route is heavily weighted in his favour if Froome has a bad day or two, and if Aru or Dumoulin don’t do in the Tour what they managed to do in Spain.

But it’s hard to believe Contador won’t end his career by trying to win the Tour of

Spain one last time. His box-office appeal is at its highest in the Vuelta, not in the Tour, so I expect to see Contador ride two grand tours in 2016 — he has just about enough gas left in the tank to achieve this.

#### **Pozzato heads south**

It was a little bit sad to see someone like Filippo Pozzato seeking a place with the lowly SouthEast team for 2016.

‘Pippo’ is a huge star in Italy, always has been, yet five years on from his last stage-win in the Giro — his last big win aside from GP Plouay in 2013 — he insists on another year’s employment in a sport that has clearly left him far behind.

You won’t meet a more down-to-earth professional cyclist than Pozzato, he’s a legend who has won Milan-San Remo and Het Volk, and achieved a multitude of near-wins in classics like Flanders and Paris-Roubaix as well as stage-wins of the Tour and Vuelta.

So why do one more year? Fact is, Pozzato just loves to race, maybe even lives to race. But a man with supposedly two Ferraris in his garage does not need to race. Still, it’s been a pleasure — Pozzato is one of the nicest guys out there.



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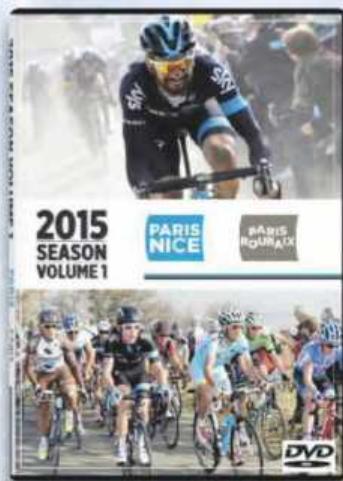
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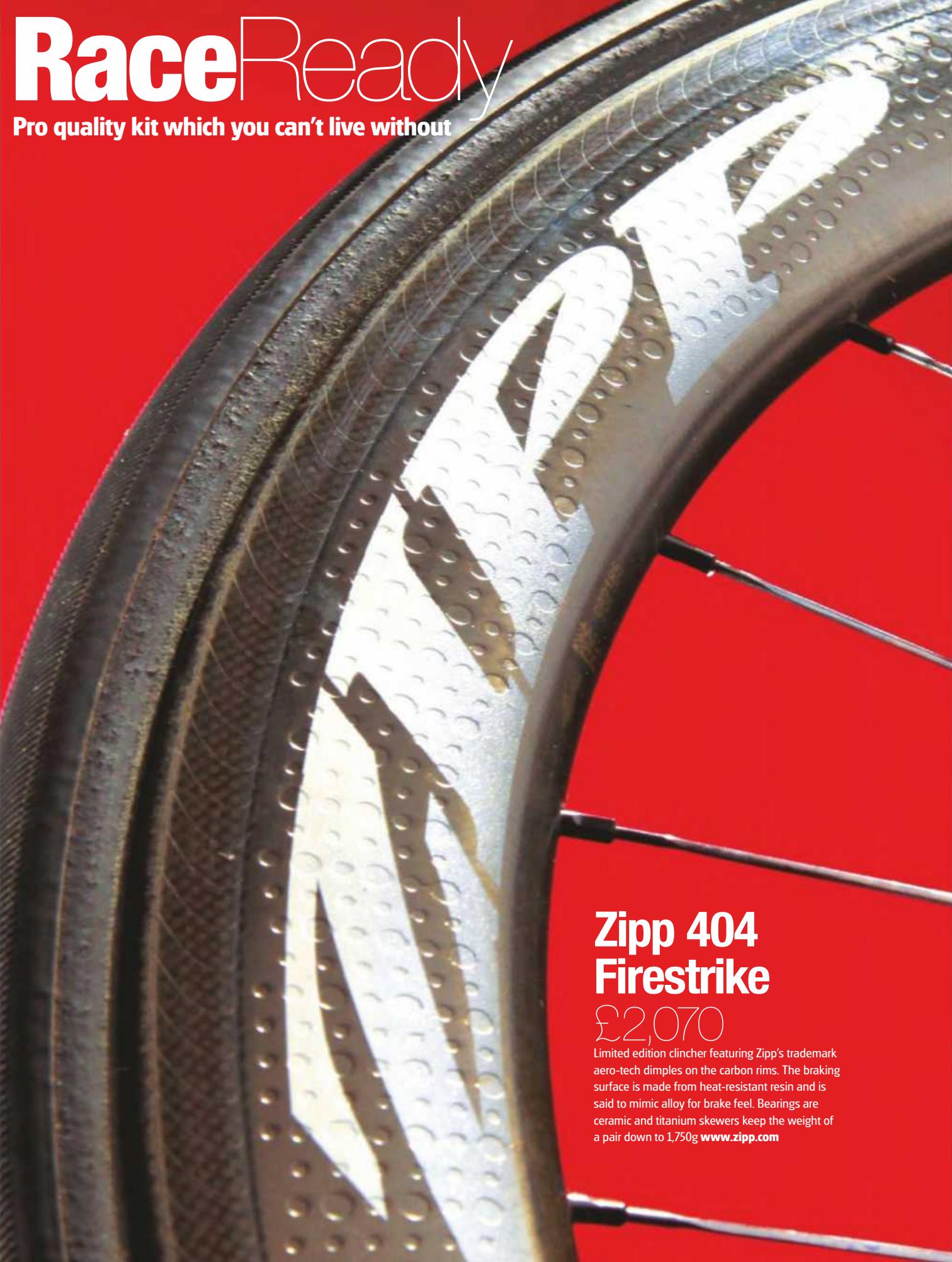
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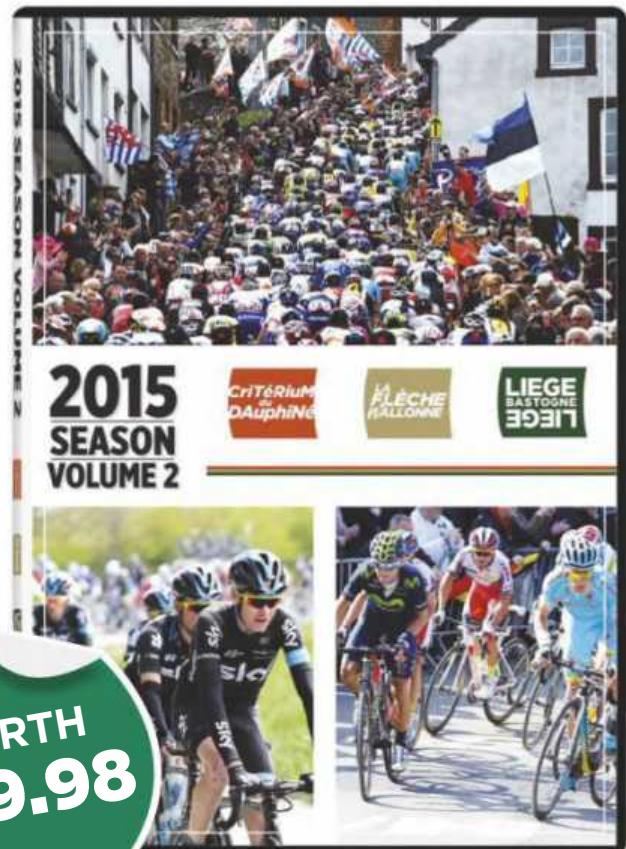
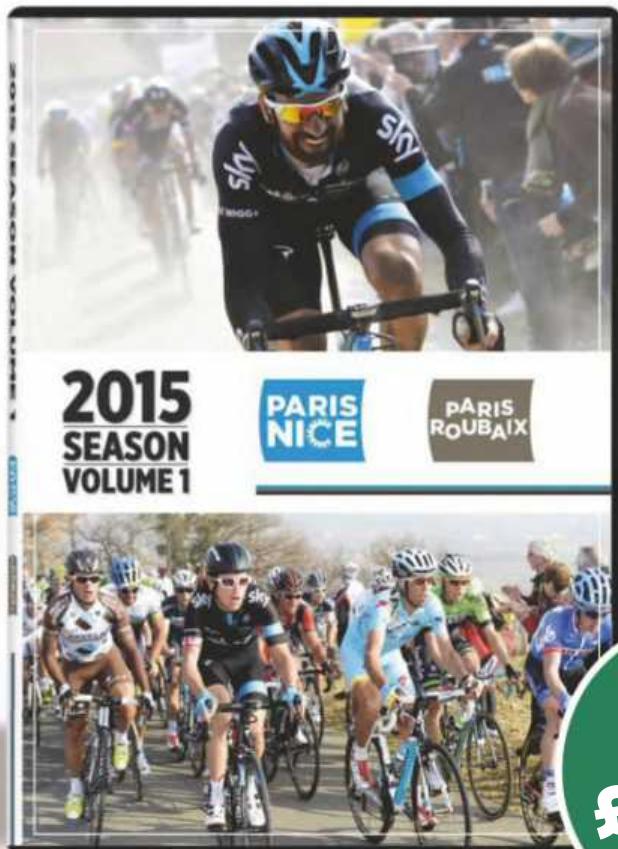
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# Don't be fooled by the big smile

'Chavito' Chaves is the fresh faced Colombian winner of the Abu Dhabi Tour and a double mountain stage winner at the 2015 Vuelta. He has the world at his feet, but his journey to get there is a heroic tale of recovery from a career-threatening crash

Words Gregor Brown Photos Graham Watson, Yuzuru Sunada

**S**aturday, February 16, 2013. Esteban Chaves's body and cycling career is wrapped around a signpost, fractured and motionless on the SP13 road that descends to Laigueglia, Italy. Had it not been for some clever surgeons back home in Bogotá, Colombia, and the faith of team Orica-GreenEdge, Chaves might never have raced again.

Before returning to the top in 2015, Chaves had tried everything to recover from that career-threatening injury at Trofeo Laigueglia. Everywhere he searched on the internet, the freckle-faced Colombian read that the shredded and ripped nerves in his right arm would mean he had "little chance" to race again. But the words that his father had repeated since he was a little boy resonated in his head: "If you have a dream, fight for it."

After nine-hours in surgery followed by 12 months without being able to move his arm fully, Chaves returned with Australia's World Tour team Orica-GreenEdge in 2014. At the tail end of the 2015 season, he beat cycling's best on two summit finishes in the Vuelta a España. Chaves continued to the Abu Dhabi Tour, his final 2015 appointment, sensationally winning the queen stage on Jebel Hafeet and with it the overall classification.

#### Fighting spirit

It had been a roller coaster ride: winning the top amateur stage race in 2011, the Tour de l'Avenir, facing up to the possibility that his career was finished after the 2013 Trofeo Laigueglia crash, and now standing with cycling's elite. After the Abu Dhabi Tour, cycling's governing body, the UCI, hosted a gala where all the grand tour winners were called to the stage along with others, including Chaves.

"You have two ways, fight or go back," Chaves says. "My father taught me to continue to fight and try."

The dream continues, too. Chaves, 25, will say without blinking his dark green eyes that he is confident he can win the Tour de France.

"My dad's a dreamer. He taught us the same. If you have a dream, you fight for it. If your dream is to go for the moon, then why not? Try it. That's the best way."

Chaves smiles often and his white teeth help light up his friendly face. Dutchman Tom Dumoulin, who placed second behind Chaves in the Vuelta's second stage and





Happy days: Chaves in the leader's red jersey of the 2015 Vuelta



surprised many to compete for the overall, remembers his rival from the early days.

"Mikel Landa or Fabio Aru, they can produce the watts per kilo like Chaves, but the thing that stands out, like it did when I first met him at the Tour de l'Avenir the year he won, is his character," Dumoulin says.

"He's super friendly, really open. Especially so for the Colombians, who are normally quite closed in character."

The day before the queen stage in Abu Dhabi, Chaves agreed to this interview. But what if he won the stage the next day? And what about the long transfer back to the hotel after the summit finish at Jebel Hafeet? "Don't worry," he said, "no problem."

Chaves attacked solo on the 11-kilometre climb in the Abu Dhabi desert. He stayed upright through the final corner, where Sky's Wout Poels crashed, and won the stage. After an anti-doping test, a press conference and one hour in the car, he said, "Let's meet after dinner."

Such openness and availability is heartening given the struggles he's had over the last two years.

### Career ending

When he was 23 years old, Chaves raced in the black colours of Team Colombia. A quasi-national team sponsored by the Ministry of Sports and based in Italy, home of manager Claudio Corti. After a successful first year in 2012, Corti told Chaves he would be on the list to ride the 2013 Giro d'Italia if the team received an invitation.

Part of the build up would include the Trofeo Laigueglia, a tough one-day race that finishes along Italy's northwest coast near San Remo.

Chaves lined up on the startline on February 16, but he never finished. In fact he is still not sure what happened that



day and the three days afterwards. His team-mate said that after 100 kilometres into the race, he misjudged a corner, hit a sidewalk and slammed into a road sign.

"The crash was bad," Chaves says.

Chaves met with *Cycle Sport* on the terrace of the hotel around 10pm in the evening. He and the team had celebrated his win with a beer and watched Australia play in the rugby World Cup. The humidity in the Abu Dhabi night was around 80 per cent. Beads of sweat ran down from his dark hair onto his brown skin, but he was happy to tell his story.

"I had a trauma to the head, blood in the lungs, a fractured jaw, broken ribs, collarbone, inner ear. It was bad. I can't remember the crash. I forgot four days of my life."

Chaves, after hearing what happened in the crash from a team helper in the hospital, asked to use his telephone so



**Top left:** Time trialling at the Vuelta 2015

**Above left:** Chaves and fans

**Above right:** Climbing, with Dominik Nerz (right), in his comeback year at the 2014 Vuelta



that he could call his parents. He spoke to his father Jairo, telling him the details and that he was in the hospital. Unknowingly, Chaves had already made the same call four times to his father.

The medical situation slowly improved. The swelling on his brain went down. Chaves underwent surgery to fix his collarbone and his other injuries began to heal. As soon as he could, he flew back to Bogotá, where a doctor's check revealed something serious, torn nerves. Chaves's axillary nerve was ripped apart and the suprascapular nerve partially severed.

"They were damaged in the crash because my arm was pulled so far back," Chaves adds. "That was the worst part. If you look in Google, reading one or two cases, you discover there's no chance."

"I thought my career was over. What can you do? You

## "The light at the end of the tunnel was Orica"

*Chaves on GreenEdge*

are 23 and you have to re-start, you can't race. Nothing."

He flew back to Italy for another consultation. They confirmed the same problem, but did not share the same urgency as doctors in Bogotá. Back home on May 30, doctors operated on him for nine hours, finding and tying together the damaged nerves. Because they were frayed so badly, doctors cut open his foot to remove nerves to fill the three-centimetre gap in his arm.

"I found doctors in Colombia who could do it. I was

lucky. My surgery went well and they told me I could recover, but I had to work a lot."

Chaves, who was completely ignoring the rugby match now, is modest. He had to learn to do everything with his left hand, to write, to brush his teeth, everything. He could not lift his arm right up for one year. Thankfully, he could still pedal.

He watched his team-mates debut in the Giro d'Italia. He stayed in his room while his friends rode on Sunday and sometimes pedalled his turbo trainer. He passed five weeks indoors with the help of his parents and younger brother before he rode for the first time, a half-hour to 40-minute ride that paved the way to the Vuelta and Abu Dhabi.

#### Colombian pioneers

To understand Chaves's optimism, it is best to look at its origins. Dad Jairo was an avid follower of Colombia's first golden period, when Café de Colombia raced in Europe and Luis Herrera ruled. Herrera won the Alpe d'Huez stage in the Tour de France and became the first from his country to win a grand tour in the 1987 Vuelta a España.

Jairo transmitted his energy to 'Chavito' when he was born in 1990. He took him to the world championships in their backyard in 1995 when Abraham Olano won. He explained time splits and checks when Colombian Santiago Botero took the 2002 time trial world title. And he cheered along with his growing son watching Félix Cárdenas and Victor Hugo Peña in the Tour.

"My dad is truly a fan," Chaves says.

#### Colombian stars

## Quintana on Chaves

Nairo Quintana was born less than a month after Chaves — on February 4 compared to January 17, 1990 — but has gone further in cycling. In July, he battled with Froome until the final day on Alpe d'Huez and lost by 1-12.

They two spent two years together in the Es Pasión-Coldeportes team, in 2010 and 2011, when they each won the Tour

de l'Avenir. They remain good friends and are often spotted talking and laughing together at races.

"We've always got on well," Quintana explains. "He's strong, you saw that as early as the l'Avenir. He worked for me to win and then I did the same for him. I'm happy that he came back from his injury and found a good team."

"Can he match me in a grand tour? I don't know. Right now, he's showing big things in races like the Vuelta. In one-week races he can do well, go for the GC in races like Paris-Nice."

"Now he's with Orica, a big team that is organised and helping him work. Se abrió el cielo — or the door has opened for him to reach greater things."



**"My father was crazy for cycling, the riders and the ambiance"**

*Chaves on growing up*

"Herrera's win in the Vuelta in the 80s was a real important event for the country because at that moment it was a really difficult period with Pablo Escobar and all that stuff. When a sport shows the beautiful face of the country, the people are proud for that. My father was crazy for cycling, the riders, and the ambiance."

"He didn't push me or my brother to do professional sports. He wanted us to participate for the discipline, to stay away from the nightlife with the parties and alcohol, and all of this. He put us in soccer, running, or swimming."

A duathlon event at 12 or 13 years old convinced Chaves cycling was his sport. On a borrowed bicycle

**Above:** Chaves is friends with Nairo Quintana, Colombia's top rider

**Right:** With first team Colombia, crashing at the Tour of Turkey 2012



## 2016 programme

## Time trials — must do better

Chaves will race the Giro and Vuelta in 2016 and will target the overall. With trophies adding up, it could be easy to overlook his weaknesses. The biggest ones, he admits, are his ability to accelerate quickly on climbs and to ride an aero time trial bike.

Colombians regularly face climbs of 30 to 40 kilometres where resistance wins over the ability to launch multiple Alberto Contador-style attacks.

"In his first year at Tirreno-Adriatico, he was demoralised because he couldn't stay with the best riders," Claudio Corti explains.

"That's one of the hardest races, all the

riders are in form, it's up or down the whole time. But in Colombia, you race with resistance, not with force. He wasn't trained to use his strength because in Colombia it's not needed."

Chaves says his accelerations are still not perfect because had they been, he could have stayed with Contador and Fabio Aru when the Giro climbed to the Abetone ski resort in May and possibly claimed the pink jersey. Instead, he slipped from second to sixth overall.

"In Europe, we often have stages with three climbs of 10 kilometres each, that's a big difference to Colombia. We have to learn to handle that and improve. We have

to do intervals, go up and down on one climb and learn how to do it," Chaves explains.

"I was really disappointed after that Giro stage. That showed me that I need to train more with my accelerations. I need to train on a three to four day block because the Giro is like this. More kilometres and accelerations. I focused for the Vuelta. I stayed in Colombia and trained like a crazy mother\*\*\*\*\*!"

"The time trials in the Tour de France are so important if I want to have a chance. I need to practice. Look at Froome or Dumoulin now, they are at the same level with Tony Martin!"

over 20 kilometres, he caught and passed many of his rivals while remembering those moments watching the Tour with his dad.

"If you like it, if you have dreams, try it," my dad told me. I said, 'Dad, I want to do running!' And he said, 'OK, try it.'

"Then I told my dad, 'I love this, I feel good on the bike.' He replied, 'OK, let's do it.' He never said 'no.'

"My mum, Carolina, she was important in the process. Normally a mum might tell your dad, 'No, you need to study and do this or that.' But she supported us."

### Proud successor

Chaves is part of a new golden era in Colombian cycling. He helped his close friend and former team-mate, Nairo Quintana win the Tour de l'Avenir in 2010, one year before he won the race himself. Quintana, besides finishing second to Sky's Chris Froome twice in the Tour, became only the second Colombian to win a grand tour at the 2014 Giro.

The current generation of Colombian professionals includes Rigoberto Urán, Sergio Henao and his cousin Sebastián Henao, Carlos Betancur and Julian Arredondo. What sets them apart is that they live in Europe most of the year and know what to expect, whereas the former generation lived, ate and trained in Colombia.

Chaves, who now lives between Girona, Spain, and Andorra, first made the transatlantic journey with his amateur team Colombia Es Pasión-Coldeportes. He joined Claudio Corti's Colombia team and moved into the former home of Corti's parents in Curno, outside of Bergamo in Italy's north.

"I was putting together the team, I saw that he won the l'Avenir. I was interested, for sure," Corti explains.

"He showed right away with team Colombia that he had motivation and the mentality to emerge in international cycling. You can tell when someone is very determined.





He had something extra in his hopes and desires.

"If he sees a building there and wants to get to the top, he will look for a ladder. If there's not a ladder, he'll look for a friend with a rope to drop down. Or any other way."

French talent Romain Bardet, now with team AG2R La Mondiale, finished further down the classification from Quintana and Chaves in the 2010 and 2011 editions of the Tour de l'Avenir. He said at the time, Quintana is pure class, but Chaves is an opportunist. Chaves, however, proved to have quality as well as fighting spirit.

"It was difficult to live alone in Europe with different languages, Italian and English, but you find yourself in these situations in your life no matter what you do," Chaves explains.

"In Curno, I lived with Jarlinson Pantano and Robinson Chalapud. We had four of us in one apartment, in two rooms. We were like a small family there: living together, making food, organising the house, travelling to the races and going home together. It was a small family of brothers."

"2012 was my first year as a professional. My first year completely away from home, I lived a different language, culture, passed a full winter in Italy when it was cold. Those conditions made me tough."

In that first year, Chaves won the final stage and the youth classification in the prestigious Spanish stage race, the Vuelta a Burgos. He returned to Italy, and collected the winner's flowers in the one-day GP Camaiore. Those victories caught the eye of the talent spotters

**"I'm confident that I can win the Tour de France"**  
*Chaves on ambition*

#### **Aussie lifeline**

Chaves received a call from Neil Stephens midway through 2013 while he was in Bogotá recovering from the crash. Stephens had directed the Australian team the year Chaves won the l'Avenir and the Orica-GreenEdge team when he won the Burgos stage. Despite Chaves's injuries, Orica wanted to sign him.

"If that operation had not been successful, his career would've been finished at 23 years old," Orica sports director, Matt White explains.

"We gave him money so he could get the best possible treatment and then at the end of September, we had him re-tested again and the doctors made the call that he'd be ready to race the next year. Even at that time, he could not raise his arm so-high or shake your hand properly."

They agreed on a three-year contract, 2014 through 2016, which was extended for two more years, through 2018, this May.

"Orica was my light at the end of the tunnel," Chaves says with his team-mates watching a post-rugby show

**Left:** Chaves climbs to victory on stage 6 of the Vuelta 2015. It put him back into the overall lead

**Above:** Victory laps at Abu Dhabi in the leader's jersey



**“The most important victory of my life”**

*Chaves's Vuelta 2015 stage win*

on TV.

“I thought, ‘My career is not over. One day, I can race the Tour. I have a contract.’ That helped me get up and go to therapy daily.

“It was hard though, you get up day after day for three months and see no progress, but that light at the end of the tunnel was Orica. That was my motivation to continue. I was one step away from my dream.”

In a comeback race, the 2014 Tour of Langkawi, Chaves climbed to fourth on the queen stage to the Genting Highlands resort. He rode back to the team car afterwards, sat in the back seat and cried as all the emotions from the past 12 months came out.

Chaves continued to improve and placed fourth overall in Malaysia. He said then in clear words, “Everyone asks me what my dreams are. I’m confident that I can win the

Tour de France.”

He is progressing well. He won the queen stages in the Tour of California with team-mate Adam Yates’s help and in the Tour de Suisse ahead of recognised professionals Roman Kreuziger and Bauke Mollema. The upward trend continued in 2015.

“Everything now — the Vuelta, Suisse, California, Abu Dhabi — it’s one way to say thank you to Orica for believing in me during a difficult part in my life,” Chaves explains.

“They might not know, but they saved me. I have to say ‘thanks.’ Without them, I may not have been able to push so hard.”

Just like the results, the kindness keeps coming. *Cycle Sport* thanked Chaves for continuing his long day and sweating through an interview in Abu Dhabi’s oven.

Chaves replies, “Thank you, friend.”

**Above:** Chaves wins stage two of the Vuelta 2015, propelling him into the race lead

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# CS

## Review of the year

### BEST & WORST

As the 2015 pro cycling year draws to a close now is a good time to look back over the season and pull out some highs, and a couple of lows

Words Kenny Pryde Photos Graham Watson, Yuzuru Sunada

## Stage Racer

### → Fabio Aru (It), Astana

**W**ith a win and a podium in two Grand Tours, Fabio Aru of team Astana has to be the stage race rider of the year. How could he not be? Sorry, what's that? He can't be stage racer of the year because he didn't take part in the Tour de France? The counter argument is that there's more to stage racing than the Tour de France!

Additionally, if your 2015 race programme has you down to win the Giro d'Italia in May and the Vuelta a Espana in August and you finish second and first in those races, it's hard to call Aru a failure. When you factor in his sixth overall in the Volta Catalunya, second overall in the Giro, with a day in the pink and two stage wins, fifth overall in the Tour of Poland, his Vuelta win and, ahem, second overall in the Abu Dhabi Tour, it shows remarkable consistency. Not bad for the 25 year old from Sardinia.

Apart from his twin general classification podiums, Aru also managed to win stages in the Giro, which is also a feather in his cap. Movistar's Nairo Quintana had a decent season too – a win in Tirreno-Adriatico remember – as well as giving Chris Froome a

fright on Alpe d'Huez in the Tour. In the end though, runner-up in the Tour, fourth in the Vuelta and no Grand Tour stage wins weighs against the Colombian.

#### Quality act

Given that Aru is riding for Astana, there are bound to be those who look upon him (and everyone in that team) with suspicion. For what it's worth, Aru has a credible stage racing pedigree, he was a two-time winner of the mountainous Under-23 Giro della Val d'Aosta and has already finished fifth and third in the Vuelta and Giro. It's not like he dropped out of the clear blue sky, going from superfluous to superstar inside a season.

In 2010, Vincenzo Nibali, then riding for Liquigas, won the first Grand Tour of his career at the Vuelta and Aru seems to be following the same trajectory. Although arguably weaker against the clock than Nibali, you don't finish twice on the podium of two Grand Tours without having considerable talent. Whether that talent can grow and make the (big) step up to the Tour de France in future years will be fascinating to watch.

**Aru makes his winning move on stage 20 of the Vuelta 2015**





Froome delivered

## Highly Commended Chris Froome

If the Tour de France represents the pinnacle of stage racing, then Chris Froome must be stage race rider of the year, right? Unless, in a weird journalistic game of Top Trumps, you might argue that two podiums in two Grand Tours beats a Tour win. In any case, Froome had a bit of an up and down season, winning the Ruta del Sol in February, ill and absent from Tirreno-Adriatico in March, third in the Tour of Romandy in May before winning both the Critérium du Dauphiné before going on to win his second Tour de France.

Given that the route of the Tour, mountainous and bereft of individual time trials, was tilted in Nairo Quintana's favour – and indeed the nature of the abuse directed at him and Team Sky, you have to take off your casquette to Froome for the manner in which he dealt with the trolling, abuse and alcohol-flavoured spittle.

The fact too that he is to release independently-gathered performance data speaks volumes for him, though if anyone thinks that will totally silence his critics, we suspect they're going to be disappointed.

**"It's not like he dropped out of the clear blue sky"**

*Aru's arrival as a Tour big-hitter*

# One-day Classic

→ Paris-Roubaix, 12 April, 2015

**B**y the time Paris-Roubaix rolls around, the cards are all on the table. Everything is 'out there' and this represents the last chance saloon for the guys who love the cobbles.

Flanders, the minor races and semi-Classics, your GP E3s, Gent-Wevelgem, Harelbeke and De Pannes have come and gone.

Everyone in the peloton knows who is going well and who's Spring Campaign has come apart like a badly-spoked wheel. Nobody is hiding anything anymore.

Roubaix was cold, bright and breezy. Not quite proper Roubaix weather which, for some, demands a splattering of mud and temperatures hovering at less than 10 degrees. But you wouldn't find too many riders in the bunch that left Compiegne complaining.

#### Shampoo'd

253 kilometres later, having bounced and battered across the 27 sectors of pave, the man of the Spring, Giant-Alpecin's John Degenkolb threw his arms up in Roubaix's velodrome, two bike lengths clear of Zdenek Stybar of Etixx-QuickStep and BMC's Greg Van Avermaet, members of a select seven-rider group.

For all that Degenkolb took the plaudits, he knew — and everyone watching could see — that his team had played a key role.

Of all his team mates it was Bert De Backer who had the best view. "It can't be better than this. The team was really fantastic today. We made a plan with our coach Marc (Reef) last night and everyone did their job perfectly."

Degenkolb had finished second the year before, which proved useful. "I think we have learned from last year, what happens when we try to take control over the race too early.

"Today, we never took control. It was a crucial move from me to jump away in the final instead of riding on the front. Then the others had to chase but they were not able to anymore."

"At the moment John and I attacked, he said to me, 'hang on!' but I was unable to follow. But I am very happy to add something to his win today."

Cycling, it's a team sport, right?

#### Paris-Roubaix 2015

John Degenkolb (Germany) Giant-Alpecin 253km in 5:49:51; 2, Z. Stybar (Cz) Etixx-QuickStep; 3, G. Van Avermaet (Bel) BMC all same time.

#### Highly Commended

## Gent-Wevelgem, March 29, 2015

With talk about 'extreme weather protocols' still only in the vague discussion phase, when riders and UCI commissaries were thinking more about snow, cold and blazing Emirates heat, nobody imagined that an anemometer might be a useful tool to have in the judge's car.

Gent-Wevelgem is of course famous for its wind-shaped echelons, though this year it became infamous for riders literally

being blown off the road and unable to ride in a straight line. But the show went on.

After 240 kilometres, Luca Paolini of Katusha would score a fine win to add to his 2013 success in Het Nieuwsblad, but it was as good as it got for the beard-sporting, Ducati-riding Italian.

A positive test for hard-partying, hard-training-aid cocaine would see him make headlines for

different reasons in July. On a hardman's day, Gent-Wevelgem was a race for the big guys and Paolini

was chased home by Etixx's Niki Terpstra and Geraint Thomas, keeping Sky's spring flag flying.





Bert de Backer  
leads Peter Sagan  
at Paris-Roubaix

“He said ‘hang on!’ but I was  
unable to follow”

*De Backer on Degenkolb*



# Team

## → Sky

**T**eam Sky is our team of the year. Before you start penning angry emails and screaming at us about how predictable it is that a Brit magazine chooses its only World Tour team as its squad of the year, then let us consider some facts and weigh up the evidence.

Yes, Chris Froome won the Tour de France, but that's not why Sky is our team of the year. From the point of view of many casual cycling fans, the Tour is the only race that matters (a bit like tennis fans who wonder what the tennis players do for the 50 weeks of the year when Wimbledon isn't on). Followers of the pro cycling season

**“Sky riders won races from January to October**  
*Sky's solid year*

will know that Sky riders won races from January to October.

It's easy to overlook 10 months later, but Sky, in case you had forgotten, also had a fine spring campaign this year too — the best in its five year existence.

There were wins by Froome and Geraint Thomas in the Ruta del Sol and Tour of Algarve. Richie Porte followed up his Tour Down Under and Aussie time trial championship with a stage and the general classification of Paris-Nice then the general classification of the Volta Catalunya — both World Tour stage races.

### Winning!

In Belgium, Thomas and Ian Stannard showed that Sir Dave Brailsford's close-season re-think was paying off as the duo were winning — not placing, but winning — in E3 Harelbeke and Het Nieuwsblad.

Late Spring successes for Porte in the Giro del Trentino led in to summer wins in the Dauphine and Tour before an autumn run which saw Elia Viviani stepping up to another sprinting level.

While it's true that Etixx-QuickStep won more races — 55 compared to Sky's 44 — Sky won more semi-Classics than Etixx (now there's a sentence you never thought you'd read) and of course triumphed in the biggest Grand Tour of them all.

With riders like Lars Petter Nordhaug, Vasil Kiryienka, Sergio Henao, Wout Poels and Leo König all chipping in with wins, Sky wasn't just a Froome-driven band either. For those reasons then, Sky is our team of the year.



## Highly Commended

### Movistar

The truth is that only the lack of a win in a Grand Tour cost Movistar our, ahem ultimate accolade, because otherwise there was a lot to celebrate.

In fact, Movistar was the UCI team of the year and contained the UCI top ranked rider of 2015 — Alejandro Valverde. Aside from wins, there was consistency in Grand Tours from Nairo Quintana and Valverde too.

However, Movistar also had sprint wins from Juan Jose

Lobato and, yes, JJ Rojas. They had time trial wins (and a World's silver medal) from Adriano Malori. Quintana won Tirreno-Adriatico.

There were Spanish, Italian and British national titles as well as two podium places in the Tour de France, stage wins at the Giro and — almost — the first Costa Rican on a Grand Tour podium with Andrey Amador fourth overall at the Giro.



The Movistar mothership had another successful year

Let's not forget the Ardennes Fleche-Liege double from that man Valverde either. And did we mention that 2015 British time

trial champion Alex Dowsett briefly held the Hour Record too? Classic wins and (nearly) Grand Tours. A proper team.

# Grand Tour

## → Tour de France, July 4-26, 2015

The Giro d'Italia had some fantastic mountain stages and real sporting drama. The Vuelta a Espana featured a great start list, two surprising new general classification contenders in Esteban Chaves and Tom Dumoulin as well as a first time Grand Tour winner.

The Tour de France however, came down to the last climb of the penultimate stage, before we knew who had won. It's such a cliché to say that the Tour de France was the Grand Tour of the year but it's hard to escape that conclusion, as entertaining and engaging as those others were.

The Tour de France is still the biggest event in the cycling year. It attracts the finest riders in their best form supported by their most powerful teams.

And we're not simply talking about the podium contenders because the sprinters' teams don't bring their second string riders either. Every team has a plan, with targeted stages to go for.

It's the totality of the Tour de France that makes it the monster that it is. More media, more pressure, more stress. While real cycling fans enjoy the whole season, the Tour is a sporting phenomenon that enters even the casual sport's fans consciousness. It makes news in a way that no other bike race does.

### Classic

The opening wind-blasted stages actually had a profound influence on the outcome of the race in ways that the much-feared team-time trial didn't, while the days in Holland, Belgium and France were like a mini-Classic every day.

We saw displaced Gent-Wevelgem style echelons in Holland, the Fleche Wallonne then Paris-Roubaix on consecutive days — and that was before we hit the mountains.

It was a race route that favoured the

**“The hardest climb  
of my career”**

*Chris Froome*

climbers. Other than the prologue there was no individual time trials so it became a harder race for Team Sky to control.

As the race wore on, Froome and his team looked more tired and vulnerable, while Movistar duo Nairo Quintana and Alejandro Valverde chipped away, getting closer and closer to unseating Froome.

The final mano-a-mano between Froome and Quintana on the climb to the finish on Alpe d'Huez was genuinely nail-biting stuff, as there was a very real chance Froome would crack, which he admitted as much later.

“I was on my absolute limits. I felt like I was dying a thousand deaths up Alpe-d'Huez,” said Froome. “There was a moment I felt ‘This could go the other way, I’m in difficulty.’ This was the hardest climb of my career.”

When you have the two best riders in the race battling it out on a legendary climb to decide the final outcome, on the last climb of the last proper stage only a day from Paris, how can the Tour not be our Grand Tour of the year?

### Tour de France 2015

Chris Froome (GB) Team Sky 84-46-14;  
2. N. Quintana (Col) Movistar at 1-12;  
3. A. Valverde (Sp) Movistar at 5-25



**Tour 2015: Froome in yellow dwarfed  
by mountains and high drama**

## Highly Commended

# Vuelta a Espana

Admit it, all the 2015 Grand Tours were fascinating, but we're choosing the Vuelta a Espana as our runner-up.

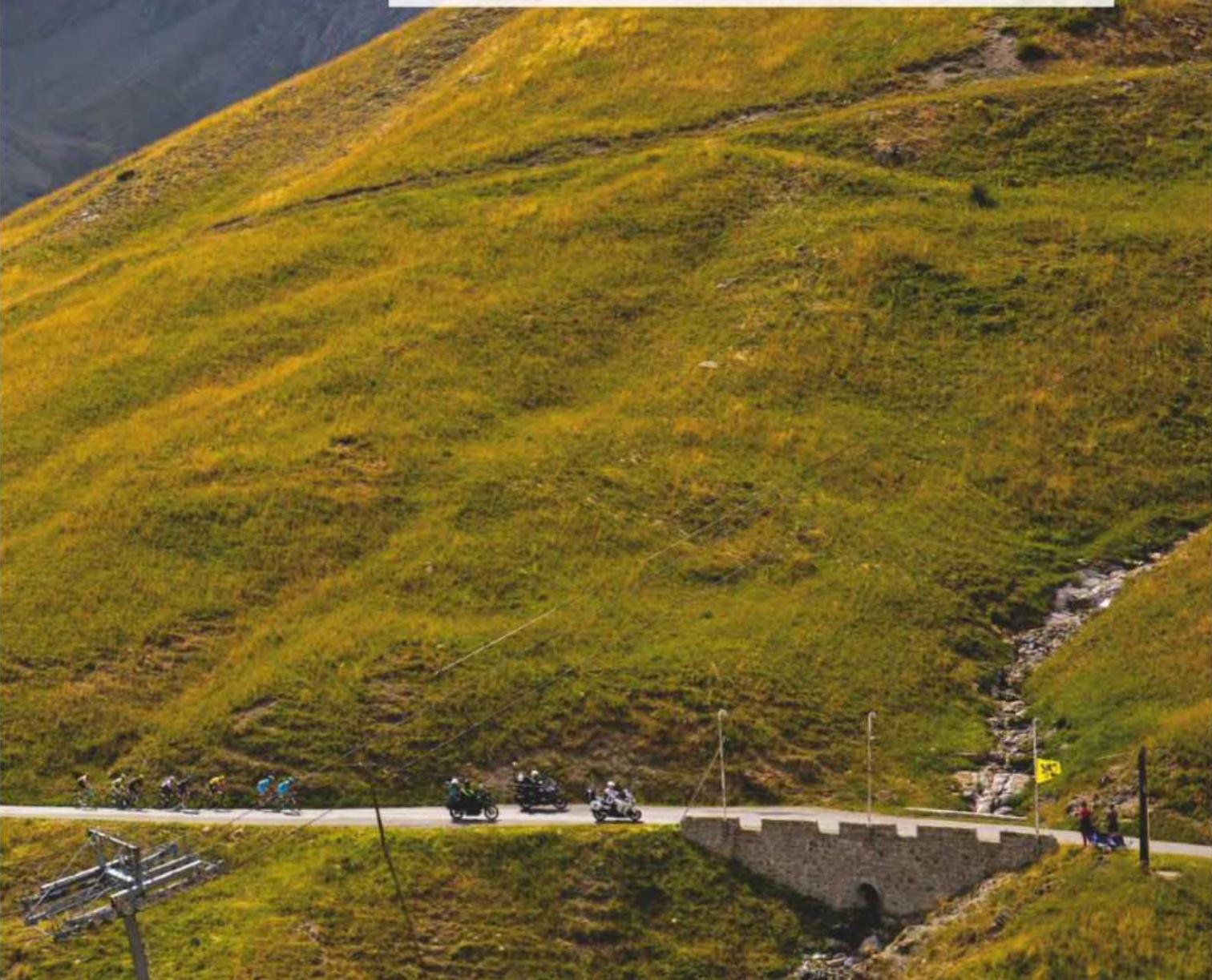
It started in a baking sand pit snaking through the flesh pots and gangster's paradise of Marbella. There was a controversial Vincenzo Nibali disqualification and there were two surprise newcomers in Esteban Chaves and especially Tom Dumoulin.

We saw crashes that took out Dan Martin and Chris Froome, witnessed a crazy mountain stage in Andorra and saw great racing every day.



Aru (right) was  
Vuelta gold

It climaxed in a savage coup on stage 20 when Astana's team work put the isolated and exhausted Dumoulin to the sword and presented us with a new Grand Tour winner in the shape of Fabio Aru with only two days to the finish in Madrid.



# Pro bike

## → Canyon Aeroad CF SLX

**T**he only thing we've got against this bike is the spelling of Aeroad. Did Aero Road simply not look right or was it not trans-national enough? And which is it, CF or SLX? In any case we can leave those minor details to the marketing department of the German company and simply enjoy the looks and a long list of results.

Canyon supplies both Movistar and Katusha with off-the-peg material and, between them, those teams racked up a lot of Grand Tour podiums (through Nairo Quintana and Alejandro Valverde), some nice stage races (Quintana at Tirreno backed by Katusha trio Joaquim Rodriguez in Pais Vasco, Simon Spilak in the Tour de Suisse and Ilnur Zakarin in Tour de Romandie) and no fewer than two monumental Classics with the Tour of Flanders (Alexander Kristoff) and Liege-Bastogne-Liege (that man Valverde again). With stage wins in every Grand Tour as well, there was nowhere a Canyon bike didn't end on the top step of the podium this year.

### Super-rigs

In truth, maybe the recognition should be for brand of the year since that also allows us to give a shout out to Alex Dowsett's Hour Record track bike which was also a thing of aero-sculpted beauty. Speaking of aero efforts, the Canyon time trial bike also won national championships in Spain, Italy and the UK, as well as carrying one of Movistar's Italians Adriano Malori to a silver medal in the world time trial championships. All in all, Canyon had a good year.

We shouldn't be surprised — the riders on those teams are no mugs of course — but Canyon insists on keeping a close eye on things, gathering feedback from the mechanics and riders to tweak new model prototypes which the riders test.

The technical directors Alfonso Galilea at Movistar and Katusha duo Claudio Bosio and Pio Zani are Canyon's dedicated points of contact inside the teams. When you are supplying three to four road frames and three time trial bikes per rider at each team, that's a lot of material and a serious investment.

Given the contact with its teams, Canyon clearly wants to make the most of what Canyon's CEO Roman Arnold prefers to call "a partnership."

*Read about the latest customer Aeroad CF SLX tested on page 104 this month*

**The Aeroad  
was a  
winning  
machine**





## Highly Commended Specialized Tarmac

With general classification wins in the Giro d'Italia (Alberto Contador) and the Vuelta a Espana (Fabio Aru) as well as the world road championship through Peter Sagan, the Specialized Tarmac model enjoyed its fair share of podiums in 2015.

Specialized missed out on the spring cobbled classics though. Monumentally speaking, Vincenzo Nibali's superb season sign-off at the Tour of Lombardy should give the Morgan Hill massive and its Tarmac range plenty to smile about.

But then, since Specialized invest in no fewer than three World Tour teams (Astana, Etixx-Quick Step, Tinkoff-Saxo) then you'd expect the big 'S' to net a few wins. And when it comes to maximising interest in its bikes and rolling out special paintjobs for Sagan and Armitstead, Specialized is still leading the bunch.



**"Canyon gathers feedback from the mechanics and riders"**  
*Improving the breed*

# Classics rider

## → John Degenkolb (Ger), Giant-Alpecin

**I**t was a close-run thing between Giant-Alpecin's John Degenkolb and Alexander Kristoff of Katusha, but in the end, winning two monumental Classics in one season, in one glorious spring run of form, was decisive in selecting the younger German rider over the Norwegian who 'only' won the Tour of Flanders in 2015.

With a canny win in Milan-San Remo where he outsprinted the cream of the spring crop, an 'in the mix at the finale' seventh place in Flanders followed up a masterful and cool-headed display to triumph in Paris-Roubaix, the 26 year-old surely deserves recognition as the best Classic rider of 2015.

### Massive

True, other high profile riders can rack up wins in smaller races, but when it comes down to it, what really counts, are wins in the biggest events where the best riders assemble and reputations are forged.

Classics legends like Sean Kelly, Johan Museeuw

and Michele Bartoli won a stack of smaller events, but it's the biggest races that make and maintain a reputation through the ages. With a 'Primavera,' a 'Pascale' and even a Gent-Wevelgem already tucked away, Degenkolb is on his way.

Degenkolb is also one of a new generation of German riders, talking about the unacceptability of doping and between his public declarations and performances on the road, Degenkolb (with Marcel Kittel and Tony Martin) can also be said to have been partly responsible for encouraging German national television to return to the terrestrial broadcasting of the Tour de France.

Interviewed two years ago at a pre-season training camp, Degenkolb was clear where his ambitions lay — on the cobbles of Flanders and Roubaix. "I'm not as fast as Marcel (Kittel) but I can be there in different races and for me, I dream of Flanders and Roubaix." Two spring campaigns later, he had already bagged a brace.



Alaphilippe is a rising star

## → Highly Commended

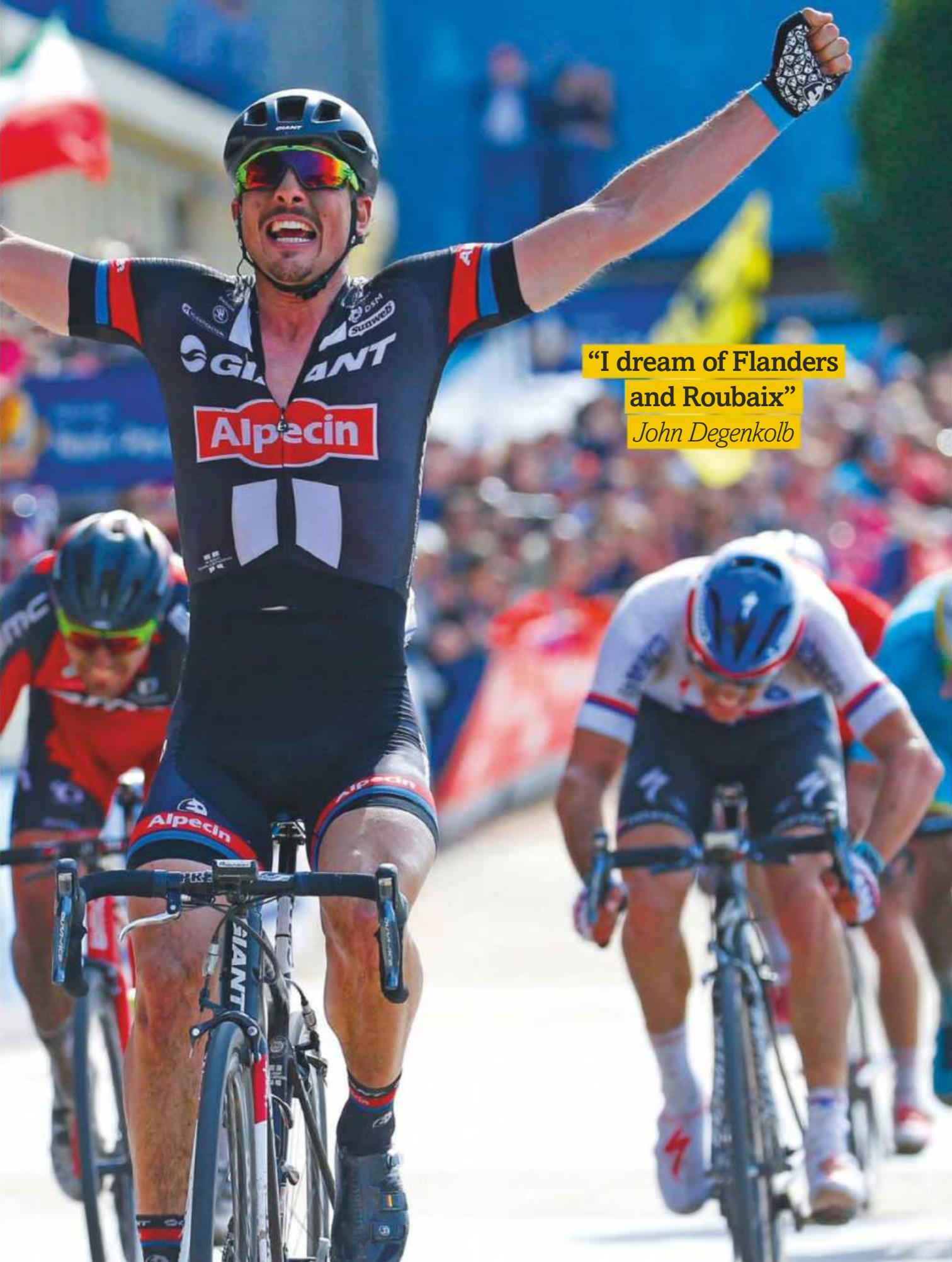
### Julien Alaphilippe (Fr), Etixx-Quick Step

Julien Alaphilippe of Etixx-Quick Step only won one race in 2015, although that was the queen stage of the Tour of California at the summit of Mount Baldy.

Perhaps a better measure of the 23 year-old were the second places at Liege-Bastogne-Liege and the Fleche Wallonne (both behind Movistar's old fox Alejandro Valverde) in April.

Those podiums were backed with a seventh in the Amstel Gold and a handful of second and third places in stages of World Tour events like the Tour of Catalunya and Tour of Romandy. If the young man from the heart of France doesn't let the plaudits of the French media go to his head, well, who knows how far he might rise as a Classics rider. Maybe he's a Laurent Jalabert for our modern age?

Tick! Degenkolb wins at Roubaix



**"I dream of Flanders  
and Roubaix"**

*John Degenkolb*

# Lowpoint

## → The crashes

**G**uessing that most readers have ridden (or are riding or racing) then most will sympathise with the fallen rider, the crash sufferer, the victim of the shunt, the shuntee, as it were.

There you are, riding in the middle of the bunch when, all of a sudden you hear the squeal of brakes, the sound of wheels locking up and skidding, riders' shouts and that horrible scraping noise made when bike and components skittle down the Tarmac. With nowhere to go but over the top, a world of hurt awaits.

Our low of the year isn't so much a single low as a series of deep lows and even deeper abrasions. More than most seasons, it seemed that 2015 was more than usually affected by crashes — and subsequent abandons — of big name riders.

The crashes that disfigured races and led to the injuries of, amongst others, Tom Boonen (Paris-Nice, Abu Dhabi), Nacer Bouhanni (Tour), Fabian Cancellara (E3 Harelbeke, Vuelta), Tom Dumoulin (Tour), Chris Froome (Vuelta), Simon Gerrans (Strade Bianche, Liege, Giro, Tour), Dan Martin (Liege and Vuelta), Tony Martin (Tour), Domenico Pozzovivo (Giro), Peter Sagan (Vuelta) and

Tejay Van Garderen (Vuelta) had a significant impact on the outcome of several races this season.

### Banged

While those higher-profile riders made the headlines for the wrong reasons, we shouldn't forget other incidents. Etixx man Pieter Serry suffered serious injuries after a high speed pile-up at the conclusion of stage two at the Giro for example.

Later in the season Paolo Tiralongo of Astana needed 36 stitches in his face and Lotto Soudal's Kris Boeckmans was knocked unconscious and put in a medically-induced coma for a week — both coming to grief on the Vuelta.

There are those who will say that these incidents are just part of the sport, pointing out that the 2014 Tour saw both Alberto Contador and Chris Froome out with bone fractures. Overall though, the 2015 roll-call of riders on the injury list was higher than previous seasons. Is it because there's less respect among riders in the bunch or because there's more road furniture or more pressure on riders? Or was 2015 simply a freak year? Let's hope it was just an unfortunate blip.

### Highly Commended

## Unsporting UCI

Can you 'highly commend' a low? It seems incongruous, but in any event the strange case of the UCI sanctioned 'death of sportsmanship' upset plenty of people.

Recall, if you will, the early stages of the Giro d'Italia when Sky's Richie Porte punctured inside the final kilometres of stage 10. In the panic of the situation, his fellow Australian Simon Clarke stopped and gave Porte his front wheel. Porte changed the wheel and raced on, ultimately losing 47 seconds to other GC contenders.

In the aftermath, social media glowed with support for this display of sportsmanship (or should it be Aussie 'mateship?') but when the UCI said Porte and Clarke had broken the rules and punished the riders, social media blazed with indignation.

The rules had to be applied, insisted the race jury. But when Alberto Contador briefly removed his helmet during a later stage, he was not disqualified, as one rule demanded.



Clarke gets Porte  
back on the road





High speed carnage  
on stage 3 of the  
Tour in Holland

**“2015 was more than  
usually affected by crashes”**

*The low points of 2015*

# Woman rider

## → Lizzie Armitstead (GB), Boels-Dolman

In cycling, tears of joy convey as movingly as anything the sacrifice and pain that the sport inflicts on its highest performers. Of all the race wins of the 2015 none matched the emotion of Lizzie Armitstead's richly deserved world road race title at Richmond USA in September.

Armitstead, already the winner of the season long women's World Cup series, looked like she had miscalculated a tense finale on Richmond's urban circuit after an attack just inside the final kilometre was snuffed out on the Governor Street climb.

Eight of the strongest women pro's in the world surged towards the line, each one calculating their gameplan for a small group sprint to the line.

Armitstead looked exposed on the front, but she was composed and alert, her ponytail flicking like a snake across her GB jersey as she checked behind for attacks. She knew that her superior sprint, even if blunted from the attack, would contain maximum venom as close to the line as possible.

### Cobra

Inside 100 metres to go and arch rival Anna Van der Breggen (NL) cracked first and launched a strong sprint. A gap opened but Armitstead had already reacted and smoothly accelerated alongside the Dutch woman. For a moment they matched each other, as they had done throughout much of the season, then the Brit eased ahead, crossing the line a bike length in front.

Tears flowed as soon as she realised the rainbow jersey was at last her's. This was a champion's jersey she had coveted since finishing second to Marianne Vos at the Olympics in London 2012. And it was a World's she thought she may not ride after crashing heavily into the finish line photographers at the Tour of Britain in June.

Despite three World Cup wins from 10, the Yorkshire woman only topped the rankings after winning the final event of the year at Plouay. It was the 26-year old's second consecutive win in the WC and confirmed her as the leading women's road racer of the moment.

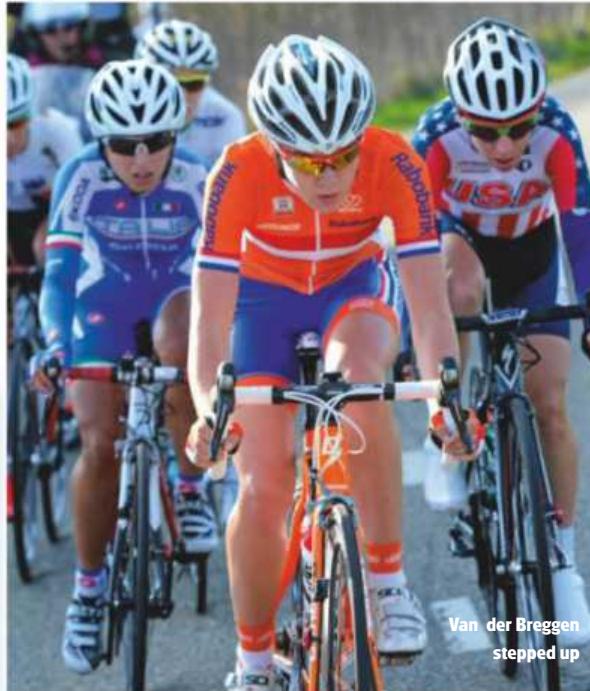
### Highly Commended

## Anna Van der Breggen (NL), Rabo-Liv

Silver medals at the World's in the time trial and the road race. Runner-up in the women's World Cup with three wins from the 10 the round series. Without Lizzie, Van der Breggen would be at the top of this page.

Highlight of her year was a solo victory in La Course by the Tour de France, where she showed plenty of 'grinta' hanging on for the win on a rain soaked Champs Elysees.

With compatriot Marianne Vos off all season, Van der Breggen was never unlikely to eclipse one of the greatest cycling champions of the modern era. That she more than did justice to her talents was testimony to her cool headed determination.





No more tears for  
Armitstead, 2015 was  
her best year yet

**“I hope it’s an aggressive race because that will suit me”**  
*Lizzie Armitstead on the World’s*

# Manager

## → Giuseppe Martinelli, Astana

**Y**es, that's Giuseppe Martinelli of Astana. Take a deep breath, pretend you are on jury service and are required to put prejudices aside and merely consider the evidence.

In the winter of 2014, UCI president Brian Cookson was calling on Astana to be refused a World Tour licence for 2015. At the same time, some otherwise credible sections of the Italian media were writing that Dr Michele Ferrari had been involved in the coaching of Vincenzo Nibali. At the end of 2014, being manager of Astana must have been about as unpleasant a job as it's possible to have in cycling.

The man at the top of the sporting pyramid is Martinelli. Yes, one of Kazakhstan's favourite sporting sons (and 2012 Olympic Games road race champion) Alexandre Vinokourov is the public face and the perennial media whipping boy of the squad, but it's Martinelli and direttore sportivo Stefano Zanini who are most frequently in the team car at the big races. Martinelli, in fact, worked all three Grand Tours.

### Maestro

In effect, Martinelli had to try to keep the team together, focused and motivated, when it looked like it might be relegated to Pro Continental level and lose key players as they fled a ship holed below the water line.

The media accusations turned out to be without foundation and claims that there was photographic evidence faded even more quickly. The team was awarded its licence and raced 2015 scandal-free (and with more coaches than most other World Tour teams).

The team didn't set the world on fire during the spring Classics (though Lars Boom went well on the cobbles), but with stage wins in every Grand Tour, three out of nine Grand Tour podiums, the GC win in the Vuelta as well as the Tour of Lombardy, Astana impressed with 34 wins.

It's only fair to point out that Martinelli, who has been in cycling for 35 years, knows plenty about the bad old days. Inside the sport he's widely recognised as one of the hardest working managers, who spends much of the year on the road.

## Highly Commended

## Jens Zemke, MTN-Qhubeka

It's no secret that we have a soft spot for MTN-Qhubeka, but as a Pro-Continental team, the modestly funded 24-rider squad won 18 races in 2015 – including Tour and Vuelta stages, the overall at the Tour of Britain and Tour of Langkawi – results that some World Tour teams would envy (because they didn't win any Grand Tour stages).

There were high profile results elsewhere too and the team rarely wasted energy in pointless adventures

without having a very specific aim – which helps explain Daniel Teklehaimenot's Criterium du Dauphine king of the mountains or his tenure of it during the Tour.

After some lean years, Edvald Boasson Hagen started winning again too. None of these things happen by chance. Given the budget of the team, the MTN management of Jens Zemke with Lars van der Haar deserves a big shout.





**“Martinelli had to try to keep the team together, focused and motivated”**

*Trouble at Astana*

Martinelli (right)  
with Vincenzo Nibali

# Scandal

## → Moto mishaps

We were not exactly spoiled for scandalous choices this season. There was hardly a doping tale to tell, apart from hipster-bearded Luca Paolini's dalliance with the Devil's dandruff. Additionally, some chancers in Italian Gran Fondos who had conveniently forgotten that EPO wasn't, in fact, an acronym for Evening Primrose Oil finally got what was coming to them — and it wasn't healthier-looking skin.

The much-anticipated Danish Anti-Doping report turned out to be as tasty as a jar of pickled herring. For connoisseurs of doping outrages, these were slim pickings, compared to the table-crushing feasts of previous years.

### Collisions

We could nit-pick that some specific decisions made by a few UCI commissaries. The weather conditions that affected the Tour of Oman (heat) or Tirreno-Adriatico (snow) or even Gent-Wevelgem (wind) might have been handled better.

However, the real scandal of the year was the apparent out-of-control-ness of a number of motorbikes in big televised races (imagine, those were the only incidents we actually saw). Perhaps it was just bad luck or maybe these were just accidents waiting to happen as the number of bikes working in races creeps up.

Where to begin? There was the crash that took out Jakob Fuglsang on stage 18 of the Tour de France, there was, more dramatically, the Spanish moto taking out BMC's Greg Van Avermaet in the closing kilometres of the Clasica San Sebastian and, the daddy of them all, the moto which clipped the rear wheel of Peter Sagan in the finale of stage eight of the Vuelta. Sagan went nuts and, looking like the Incredible Hulk in shredded lycra, lashed out at both commissaires and errant moto. For his trouble he was fined 300 Swiss Francs for 'bringing the sport into disrepute' which would be funny if it wasn't so absurd.

Sport directors need to pass a UCI test and exam to be considered fit to drive 'in' the peloton. Media who want to get 'inside' the race and overtake a breakaway need to hold a UCI Press driving licence. Are all motorbike drivers who work on races required to undergo any specific training or hold a special licence? We contacted the UCI for clarification. We've been on hold, listening to Papa Smurf and his Aigle Alpenhorn Ensemble for hours now. "Next time you're feeling blue just let a smile begin, happy things will come to you, So smurf yourself a grin!" We'll, uh, pass the word to Jakob, Greg and Peter...

Greg Van Avermaet was knocked off in San Sebastian



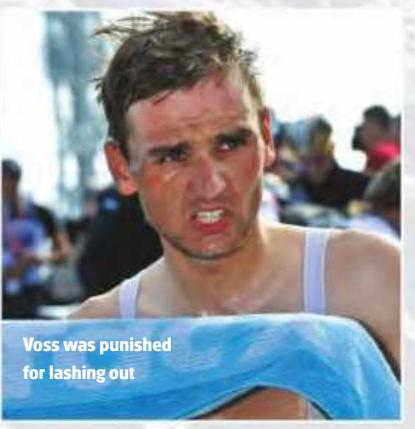
**"Perhaps it was just bad luck"**

*Incidents involving race motos*



## Highly Commended Paul Voss

When Paul Voss of Bora Argon was disqualified in the Abu Dhabi Tour for punching another rider in the ribs, it was understandable, on every count (that he did it and that he was punished). Voss was flat-out going for an intermediate sprint when he was slammed into the kerb. That the rider who rode the sprinting Voss into the kerb stayed in the race was absurd. Scandalous, you could say.



Voss was punished  
for lashing out

# Retirement

## → Pablo Lastras (Sp), 39

**A**nyone who has managed to complete 18 years as a pro must have something going for them. Furthermore, anyone who has stuck with the same team and staff must be one of the good guys, surely? With that in mind, you would presumably agree that Pablo Lastras of Movistar deserves recognition as he hangs up his team issue bib-shorts for the last time.

Lastras won stages in the Tour de France, the Giro d'Italia and the Vuelta a Espana in his long career but what makes his professional life even more noteworthy is that he spent every year in the same team. OK, when he started out in 1997 it was called Banesto, Jeremy Hunt was still on the team and Abraham Olano was finishing his sojourn in the world road race champion's jersey.

In due course Banesto pulled out of the sport to be successively replaced by Ibanesto, Illes Balears-Caisse d'Epargne, Caisse d'Epargne and finally Movistar. In the end his decision to retire was not entirely his own, since a fall in the Volta Cataluña in late March saw him suffer a

bad pelvis fracture. It wasn't the first time he had broken a bone, but at this stage in career, it was one serious injury too many. Although his physiotherapy and training were geared up to enable him to return to competition, it became clear his time in the saddle was up.

### Message

Rather prophetically, Lastras took part in a residential course in at the UCI headquarters in Aigle last year to pass his UCI directeur sportif 'badge,' so there's a strong possibility that he'll be back working in cycling.

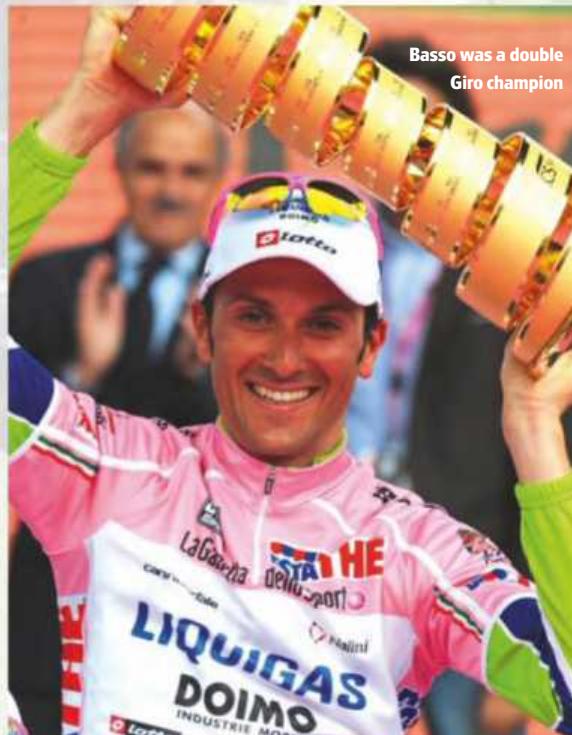
Speaking to Spanish media, he said, "Now all I want to do is recover properly and then try to give cycling something back, after all that cycling has given to me. That's my aim. After my experiences this year, I'd like to send a message to every sportsperson to take care of themselves and enjoy what they do while they can, but don't forget to prepare and study for your life after you stop competing. Life goes on after you stop cycling."

## Highly Commended

### Ivan Basso

The records still show that Ivan Basso was a two-time winner of the Giro d'Italia and twice finished on the podium in the Tour de France. They'll also show that he served a two year ban for attempted doping or thinking about doping but not doing it or whatever the phrase was. In any case, his implication in the Spanish Operacion Puerto left an ugly stain on his career.

Basso, 37 this year, endured a testicular cancer diagnosis during the Tour de France which forced him to withdraw from the race. Happily, he underwent treatment and returned to the Tinkoff-Saxo Bank team, but admitted shortly after that he didn't have the same hunger or desire required to race at World Tour level. Like so many other riders of his generation, those who raced from the 1990s to the present, it's hard to properly assess a career that has a two year black mark against it. All we can say is that he was one of the best riders plying their trade in the peloton of that era, how much glory you wish to accord him is up to you.



Basso was a double Giro champion





**"Lastras completed  
18 years as a pro"**  
*Long and proud career*

Spectacular desert  
landscape of the UAE  
outdoes the dunes of  
Qatar and Oman



# Empire OF THE Sun

Abu Dhabi's inaugural stage race was good in parts, bad in others. Stifling temperatures and lack of fans aside, it confirmed the Gulf states as the early and late-season hosts of the pro calendar

Words Gregor Brown Photos Graham Watson



**C**olombian Esteban Chaves stood on the podium in the Yas Marina Formula One track in Abu Dhabi with an awkward looking trophy.

The blazing sun had gone down on the United Arab Emirates hours earlier. Under solar powered floodlights Italian Elia Viviani had sprinted to victory in the final stage of the Abu Dhabi Tour, 110 kilometres on the glamourous Formula 1 circuit.

The inaugural Abu Dhabi Tour, which covered four days from October 8 to 11, was finishing on a successful note.

Colombia's star in the ascendant, Esteban Chaves of team Orica-GreenEdge, with two Vuelta stage victories and now his first general classification win, took another step in his budding career.

He descended from the podium with a Ferrari-designed carbon trophy to the applause of the fans, UCI President Brian Cookson and head of the local sports council which owns the race, Aref Hamad Al Awani.

Critics from afar questioned the oil-funded race in the heat and sand taking the place of Europe's traditional events, but those on the circuit that night felt that a celebration was merited.

"The team asked me in January if I wanted to come, and I said, 'Why not?'" Chaves said as he came off the podium. "This race is new, helping cycling become more global. Would I come again? For sure."

### Gone global

Finishing the 2015 pro season around a one-billion dollar 5km motor-racing track would appear odd to older cycling fans. It's not that long ago that Italy's one-day monument, the Giro di Lombardia, traditionally closed the road season.

But times change and the money in professional cycling has moved away from cycling's traditional heartland of Europe.

Races in Australia, North America

and China have emerged. The UCI created the Tour of Beijing in 2011 with Chinese money. Once that dried out, a spot at the end of the season opened up. Italian-based RCS Sport stepped in.

RCS Sport organises races such as the one-day monuments Lombardia and Milan-San Remo, and its top event, the Giro d'Italia – both around 100 years old. With the Abu Dhabi Tour and the Dubai Tour in February, it now has two new – and lucrative – races in its portfolio.

"I live in Dubai. I began coming and going in 2013. That year, I slept about 28 days in the air!" says Lorenzo Giorgetti, CEO of RCS Sports.

Giorgetti comes from Milan, near RCS Sport's headquarters, and jokes about the change. "It's a young and international city, open-minded even if Muslim. It's in order and clean. Everything functions! But to get to the heart of it, it's a proud country. The locals are proud."

### Well established

The locals are also mostly wealthy, which makes race promotion that much easier. Neighbouring gulf state Qatar has shown what can be done.

### Home grown

## What's in it for the locals?

The Abu Dhabi and Dubai Tours have raised the status of cycling in the UAE to support a federation team and the Continental-level SkyDive team. The country regularly wins medals in the Gulf and is now doing so at the Asian level.

"Of course, we are happy to race with pros, the world champions, and Tour de France winners," says Majid Al Balooshi, who rides for the national team.

"We are lucky that our country is putting on these races for us and we have a chance to compete. We start today with Yousef Mirza in the race, maybe one day he will be world

champion. It's possible."

Al Balooshi, 28, began cycling because his friend rode. It was not popular, but he says that opinions are changing. The biggest challenge for him to overcome is the heat.

"In the summer we don't train. The weather is not good for cycling. Maybe we can do a max of 60 or 90 kilometres, leaving at five or six in the evening when it's cooler."

"Every year, we go for one month abroad. This year we went to France, in St-Jean-de-Maurienne, for 45 days." He said the next step is to have a professional team or a local racing in one abroad.





Qatar wanted a bike race to help boost its sports status towards an Olympic bid, so it contacted Eddy Merckx, who called Tour de France organiser ASO. Along with the Tour of Qatar, beginning in 2002, ASO now organises a women's version and the Tour of Oman.

Dubai wanted to host the Giro d'Italia's grand depart, but RCS Sport explained that for the same amount of money they could create their own international race.

The Dubai Tour began in 2014 and celebrated its second edition this February. Neighbouring emirate Abu Dhabi now has a race, too.

"We bring all of our experience in marketing, organisation, TV production and rights, even local

marketing, but the Abu Dhabi Sports Council owns the race," Giorgetti says. "We said, 'The event and the brand belong to you. If we are good, we will continue to work together.'"

The tours have 10-year contracts. RCS Sport is happy because it now has a foot in the rich arab states and the means to support its own races back home.

But what is in it for the UAE? The country that cradles the Persian Gulf is promoting sport to combat obesity among its people, which is double the world's average.

It hosts marathons and cycling sportives. Each Tuesday night, the same F1 track is opened for the exclusive use of local cyclists, runners and walkers.

**Above:** Glitz finale at the Yas Marina F1 motor racing circuit

### Cycling fits

But Abu Dhabi's interest in sport is also about global status.

"Cycling transmits images of the country, and they are proud to show off their country," Giorgetti adds.

"They are also huge sports fans. In their homes, the TV is always on with a game. Everyone has a European football team that he supports.

"This sport can take off in the medium to long-term. They are physically suited to it. They can't play basketball at a high level, but they can ride bikes."

For the first time since the 1996 Atlanta Games, the UAE will send a cyclist to the 2016 Olympics. Younis Mirza, who helped the country qualify, is due to compete in the road race.

## Real life

# Cycling in Abu Dhabi

The locals say that if you know how and where to ride, the open roads are safe. If you prefer closed ones, they exist too.

Al Wathba – The cycling track, lit by solar powered lights at night, offers loops from eight to 30 kilometres, and one of up to 100 kilometres is coming soon.

Yas Marina Circuit, the F1 track, is 5.5 kilometres long and opens for cycling every Tuesday night.

## Hot ticket

The country consists mostly of sand dunes and deserts and the heatwave which swept the UAE in early October nearly ruined the Abu Dhabi Tour.

Cutting through the vast rolling

Empty Quarter, stage one winner Andrea Guardini said his SRM Power Commander head unit recorded temperatures on the road in the 50°s with the mercury showing 40 to 45°C. The organiser responded by cutting the stage short.

Thankfully for the new event, the riders toughed it out and luckily temperatures eased as the race continued. The peloton seemed to understand that RCS Sport was trying to bring in new money to an often cash-starved sport.

"We are riders, we go where we are told to go, but I actually asked to come here," said Sky's Ben Swift. "It's nice to get a bit of sun on your back even if it is quite intense. In England this time of year, it starts to get grim.

"Racing in the heat is difficult, but

it serves well for the world champs next year in Doha. So it's good to get that experience now."

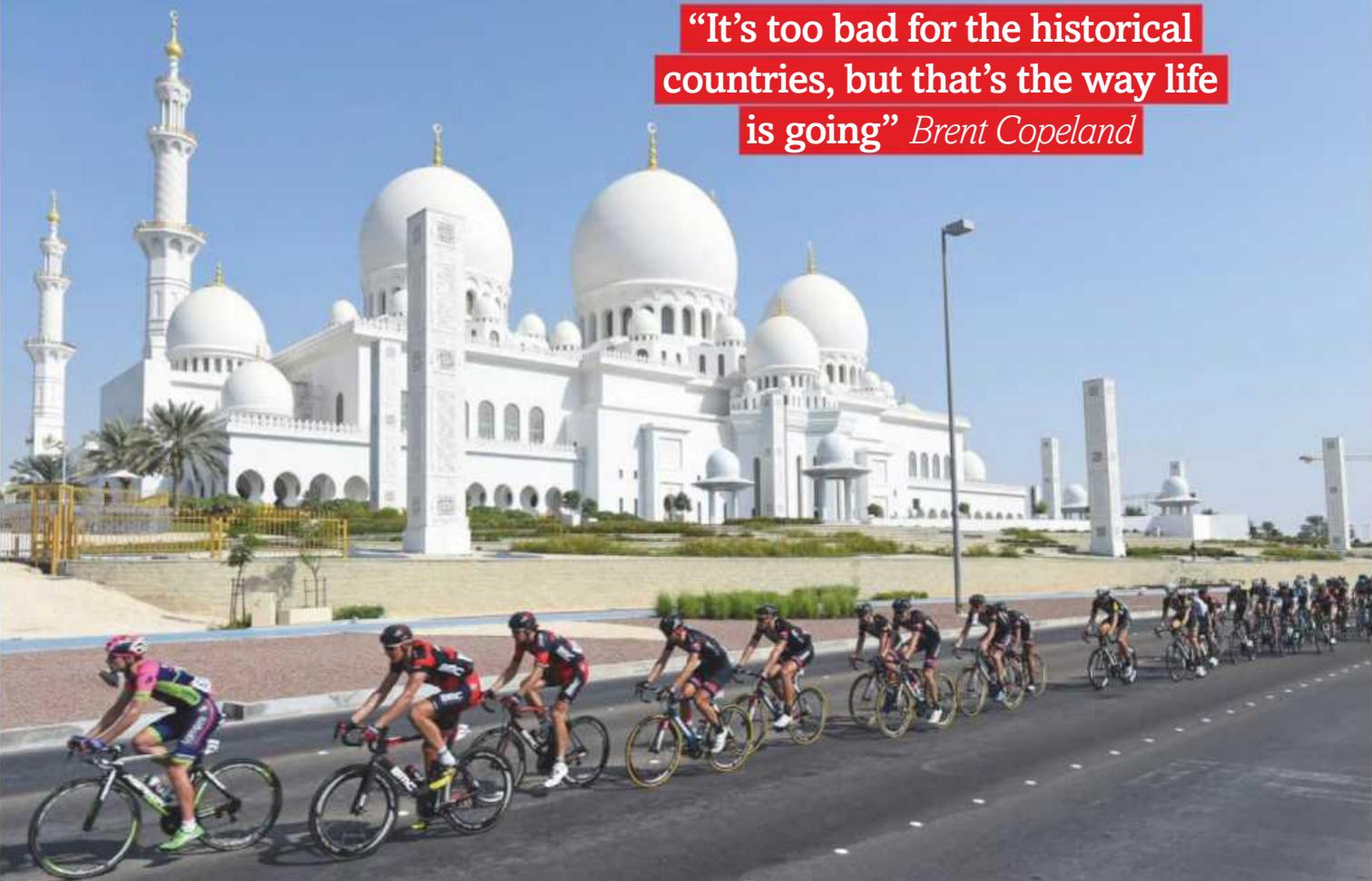
And the Abu Dhabi Tour had something more spectacular than the ones in Dubai, Oman or Qatar – an 11-kilometre summit finish to Jebel Hafeet. Chaves won this key stage to snatch the overall title.

But that stage and the finish on the F1 circuit highlighted a problem: the disappointing lack of fans.

## Crowd funding

Apart from curious locals and ex-pats living in Abu Dhabi, there were precious few stood roadside at the starts and finishes, and no one dared venture into the vast emptiness between the villages. The Tour of Qatar has the same problem, and that

**"It's too bad for the historical countries, but that's the way life is going" Brent Copeland**





race has been around for more than a decade.

"When the Giro d'Italia began in 1909 from Piazza Loretto there weren't many people," Giorgetti says.

"You need time. Do we need one hundred years? No, but you need some time."

Brent Copeland, manager of Italy's Lampre-Merida, brought one of the 10 World Tour teams to Abu Dhabi.

"Some races in Europe only have pensioners watching," said Copeland. "It's a different culture and mentality. They don't have a cycling past, but with the teams that they have here, UAE and Skydive, it's growing."

"If they produce a champion, everything else will follow. We have to start somewhere. Cycling realises that you have to get into the other countries to see what is happening there."

"It's too bad for cycling's historical countries, but that's the way the sport is going."

### Gala finale

Abu Dhabi already hosts the final round of the F1 championship in November. The Sports Council applied the same strategy to cycling by hosting an end-of-season event to generate greater coverage. Besides the tour, it also paid for the UCI's first end-of-season gala on Sunday evening.

**Above:** Jebel Hafeet was the highlight

**Left:** Cultural sights could not hide the lack of fans

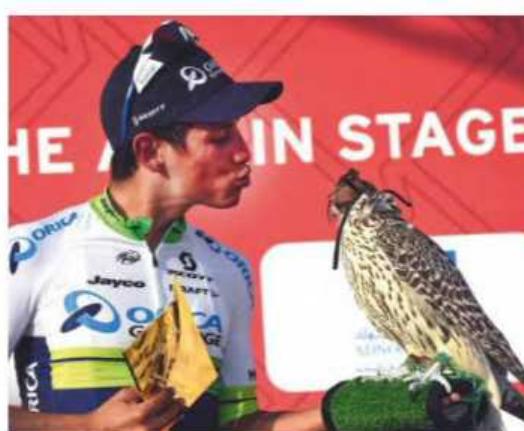
**Below:** Winner Esteban Chaves recognises a fellow predator

Abu Dhabi flew in UCI president Brian Cookson and cyclists who were not racing at the Abu Dhabi Tour including Chris Froome and Alberto Contador.

Despite a few small hitches, the feeling Sunday evening was that the 2.1 ranked tour has a bright future. World Tour status could help push things along. "We've already presented our proposal to join," says Giorgetti. "It's up to the UCI to decide now."

As part of the UCI reforms for the 2017 season, new races could join its flagship World Tour calendar. Qatar and Oman reportedly would fill the February gap between the Tour Down Under and Paris-Nice and the Abu Dhabi Tour could take the place it would like the most as the closing event of the season.

One thing is sure, we haven't seen the last of the Abu Dhabi Tour or races through the sun and sand of the middle-eastern deserts.



END



# G's big

Can Geraint Thomas win a Grand Tour? That's what the Welshman seemed to be asking himself during this year's Tour de France when he rode so strongly in support of eventual winner Chris Froome. Next season he has to decide whether to commit again to his beloved Classics or reinvent himself as a leading GC contender of 2016



# question

Stage 4 of the 2015 Tour de France, Seraing to Cambrai: Geraint Thomas (left) confers with team leader and yellow jersey Chris Froome as both riders boss the peloton across treacherous sections of cobbles



**Above:** Thomas has grown in confidence during his time at team Sky

**Right:** Aggressive riding in Classics like the 2015 Milan-San Remo has gained Thomas many new fans

**I**t is reassuring in many ways, that Geraint Thomas has only slowly transformed himself into a general classification rider. Which is to say that he did not wake up one fine Welsh morning and decide that he was going to switch from 'former pursuiter to one-day hitter' into 'former pursuiter into stage race general classification rider.'

In modern cycling, there aren't many riders capable of carrying that one off. Speaking at the Vuelta, Thomas was still not quite ready to nail his colours to the GC mast.

"It's not something that you decide overnight, it's something that takes a while to come round to, with the confidence that starts to grow when you start to get results," mused Thomas.

In these days of specialisation — of teams within teams of riders targeting specific races or blocks of races — the decision to back-off on the Classics and focus on stage race ambitions is a big one. One that Thomas has inched towards over months and years.

Aside from the physical and psychological challenges,

**"I think it is possible for guys to ride well in the Classics and in stage races for the GC"**

*Thomas on all-rounders*

for Thomas there was also the small problem of being in a team jammed with potential stage race superstars. From Tour winner Chris Froome, to new recruit and Giro d'Italia target man Mikel Landa, Thomas was setting himself a big challenge.

The fact that Richie Porte quit the team for a big BMC cheque probably helped the 29 year-old Welshman to decide that he could — and would — be the Sky guy to lead the line-up in Paris-Nice and other week-long stage races. The fact is, there is still no shortage of Grand Tour contenders at Sky. Had he thought of leaving? Might he still move on?

"I wouldn't join any team, if I did leave Sky, but if there came a point where I thought I was in the shape and position to challenge at a Grand Tour and someone was 'in the way' so to speak, then I'd have to think about leaving, but I wouldn't go to just any team," explains Thomas.

#### Not like football

Thomas, a pro since 2007, is wise enough to know how the peloton works. You can take the cash and not worry much about career progression or you can go to a team where you think you have a chance of progressing.

"The thing is that it's not really like a football team or something where you might want to leave to play in a different country or league or a bigger team. When it comes to Sky, we've got the best back up in the sport you know?"

"It's not like I would leave because I thought another team was doing things better, because I don't think they are," notes Thomas. He's got a point. It's not like he's a talented player on a small team who reckons the only way he'll get Champions League football is if he joins Arsenal from Spurs.

For all that the decision to become a GC rider was taken after considerable reflection, there still had to be a moment when it was made. What were some of the factors that played a part? "That process of thinking that I'd like to ride for the GC in stage races really took hold after Paris-Nice.

"I think maybe it was partly to do with confidence in myself and seeing what I was capable of. The Tour this year (2015) helped as well, being at the front for all that time and then just lacking a bit for the last two days, to be so close to being there, that was disappointing," says Thomas.

#### Old school heroes

However, it's not unheard of, even in the (relatively) modern pre-millennial era, for riders to be able to ride well, to actually win Classics as well as the general classification of stage races.

The greats of yesteryear managed it (Eddy Merckx, Bernard Hinault, obviously, but let's not forget Sean Kelly, Laurent Fignon or Gianni Bugno) but Thomas, quite understandably, makes a more modest, more modern reference.







**Above:** In his element at the epic 2015 Gent-Wevelgem. Thomas finished third.

**Below:** Stage race climbing is a power to weight gamble

"I think it is possible for guys to ride well in the Classics and stage races for the GC. If you look back, Fabian Cancellara won the overall at the Tour of Switzerland and Tirreno-Adriatico in the past, so it's not impossible, but the way things are now I think it's getting harder because riders are getting more and more specialised."

One of the areas in which the modern stage race rider has to pay special attention is in body weight. You don't end up on the podium of a Grand Tour these days carrying a spare kilo of fat to keep you insulated in Flanders.

Thomas is hardly a lard-arse, but he's aware that he'd

need to check his BMI. "It would take a real effort and commitment to lose the weight that I'd need to and the way my career has been so far my weight has moved up and down depending on my programme because obviously you don't want to be so lean for the Spring Classics as you do for the Tour," accepts Thomas.

You can sense, however, that he has already been contemplating his options and cutting down on the Welsh cakes. "Looking back at my time with BC and the track, I'm quite happy and used to having that single focus, so I know I can commit and it generally works well for me."

### Vuelta for training

It's hardly standard practice or industry standard, but there is a belief in some circles that riding the Vuelta is excellent preparation for the Spring Classics or that — as Chris Froome, Bradley Wiggins and Vincenzo Nibali have shown — riding the Vuelta is good preparation for the following year's Tour de France.

Either way, you suspect that Thomas is about to find out what the training effect of the Vuelta is. "I had a long season, from January in Australia, the Algarve, Paris-Nice, the Classics and they were mostly World Tour races."

Thomas' Vuelta race plan was modest, he was "hoping to ride myself in to the Vuelta and still be there at the end rather than it start off flat-out and be hanging on from the first stages."

"I've done the Canadian races and the Tour of Britain about eight times I think, so I thought I'd come here."





**“At Sky, we’ve got the best back up in the sport”**

*Thomas on Team Sky*

Depending on the rider, the parcours of the Vuelta and of the world championship, or at least three weeks in Spain is seen by many as optimal preparation for the Worlds-Trittico. Autunno and Thomas certainly had the Richmond World's in mind when he started the Spanish tour.

“Partly I’ve got half an eye on the world championships and partly it’s to see what difference it makes to my winter training. A big race block like the Vuelta should help me this winter, especially compared to the last one. Last year I crashed when I was out training on my time trial bike and wrecked my hand.

“In the end I sort of limped over the finish line at the end of the season. Then I had a few days off. I put on a load of weight and when I started training again it seemed like a long way back to get fit again. I’m hoping the Vuelta will have a good effect in that I won’t lose as much going through the winter.”

In the end, Thomas finished the Vuelta (in a modest but

untroubled 69th place overall) before withdrawing from the world championship road race, citing the fatiguing effects of that long season.

With a marriage to plan and the 2016 season to prepare for too, perhaps the trek to Richmond was simply a race and a trans-continental trip too far, though who knows when Thomas will be faced with a cobbled climb that matches his skills so well again?

You get a strong feeling that finishing the Vuelta was more about a longer term goal than simply giving it a go in the world road championships. Two Grand Tours in a season allied to growing confidence in his ability to go the distance and climb with the best means that Thomas’s stage racing ambitions have risen.

The stakes in 2016 will be higher and if a leaned-down Thomas ends up on the podium of a stage race or two, we shouldn’t be surprised. The surprise might be which stage race podium it is.

**Above:** Winning the 2015 Grand Prix E3 Harelbeke



**“World class pursuers  
need to produce good  
seated power”**

*Kerrison on trackies*

#### **Results 2015**

**Geraint Thomas (GBr), 29**

**Team: Team Sky**

**Lives: South Wales**

- 1st overall Tour of Algarve, 1st Stage two, 3rd stage three TTT
- 5th overall Paris-Nice, 2nd stage four
- 1st GP E3 Harelbeke
- 3rd Gent-Wevelgem
- 1st stage one TTT Tour of Romandie
- 2nd overall Tour of Switzerland
- 15th overall Tour de France, 2nd stage nine TTT

Thomas has an  
enviable record as  
a track pursuer at  
the Olympics and  
World's



## Team Sky supercoach

# Tim Kerrison: the brains behind the Thomas masterplan

One man who has a better understanding both of Geraint Thomas and any switch from Classics rider to Grand Tour contender, is Sky's Head of Performance, Tim Kerrison.

The Australian coach was, not surprisingly, reluctant to speculate on Thomas's potential, should the Welshman decide to fully commit to becoming a GC rider, rather than someone pigeonholed as essentially a one-day man. Which is perfectly reasonable, given that neither party had yet properly studied the options and ramifications.

However, Kerrison (pictured, right) was in no doubt that a world class pursuer (and Thomas has been double Olympic champion in the team discipline in 2008 and 2012, setting a world record in the process. He also won a world title) could indeed make the transition to what we might call a fully-rounded stage race rider.

"You only have to look at what this team has achieved with those sorts of riders to see that the physical demands of the pursuit are a fair indicator of a rider's capabilities in many areas that are important when it comes to riding stage races for GC."

"There are a lot of elements that help determine a rider's ability in a Grand Tour, but pursuing reveals their basic engine. World class pursuers need to produce good seated power and it also shows their ability to pace themselves so it's generally a good pointer to their potential."

### The deep end

"I think if G did decide to fully commit then I know he is able to go really deep when he's making big efforts; there are very few riders capable of going as deep as him in training and racing."

"In the last couple of seasons we've seen G put in really strong GC performances at Paris-Nice, in the Tour of Algarve, in the Tour of Switzerland and of course this year in the Tour de France when he was there until the final three days."

"When you look at those performances, I think it's fair to say that G has gained a lot of confidence in himself and his ability, but, as I said, we are still in the early stages of



exploring and developing this potential."

For Kerrison, Thomas's performance in the Tour was underpinned by his ability to dig deep and in the end he went so deep he ran out of gas.

"When you go really deep in a race and do it on repeated stages, there comes a point when you can't fully refill the tank and then you risk running out of gas. I think perhaps G paid for his repeated efforts and on the Tour all you need is one bad day."

It's also worth recalling that Thomas wrapped himself around a telegraph pole on the descent of the col de Manse into Gap when he was punted off the road by Warren Barguil of Giant Shimano. Given Thomas' relentlessly chipper demeanour and near instant recovery on that stage, it's easy to forget that he took a big hit and who knows to what extent that crash had an effect on his time losses in the following stages?

And yet, unlike Froome, whose sole goal and aim was the 2015 Tour, Thomas had been racing from January and had had his best-ever Classics season before transforming himself into a stage race rider.

A tough return at the Tour of Romandie led to his sterling ride in the Tour de France via a runner-up spot in the Tour of Switzerland. If Thomas and coach Kerrison did orchestrate a season around a big GC goal, who knows, maybe Thomas' tank wouldn't run out of gas?

# The Giro's dilemma

**It bills itself as the world's toughest race in the world's most beautiful place, which may be true, but the Giro d'Italia is condemned to live in the shadow of the Tour de France.**

Words Kenny Pryde Photos Yuzuru Sunada, Graham Watson, RCS Sport

**O**n a sparsely decorated stage in a room the size of an aircraft hangar at Milan's Expo — imagine a theme-park sprawl without any thrill rides — four riders sat in front of a crowd of thousands.

RCS Sport was revealing the route of the 2016 Giro d'Italia and, the day after the Tour of Lombardy, had corralled Vincenzo Nibali, recently-crowned world road champion Peter Sagan, world number one ranked rider Alejandro Valverde and 2015 Giro winner Alberto Contador to offer their observations on the stages.

The irony, of course, was that it was unlikely any of that starry quartet would be at the start in Apeldoorn south-east Holland on Friday May 6, 2016. The presentation dragged on as the other guests on stage waffled on, unhindered by any sense of urgency or timekeeping (the route presentation was neither broadcast nor streamed). At one point it looked like Sagan had nodded off. Few would have blamed him.

Next year's route has a fearsome final week in the mountains, a start in some far-flung logistical-nightmare location and a first week introduction to hilltop finishes that makes the Giro such an exciting, fascinating and unpredictable race. When you throw in three time trial stages, though they only total 61 kilometres of racing, and seven mountain stages, Giro 2016 is a tremendous race in prospect.

#### Onto a loser

It's a safe bet that the 2016 Giro will turn out to be a great race and your money back if you are not fully satisfied. But what we can also

**“The Tour looks like the best preparation for Rio, the Giro is too early”**

*Alejandro Valverde on 2016*

guarantee is that it won't feature the same start list of riders as the Tour. Or even the Vuelta. Not only will the Giro — as ever — struggle to attract the very best riders, saving themselves for the Tour, but the smart money says that the Tour de France will also constitute the best preparation for the Rio Olympics road race and time trial.

In 2016, the luckless Giro will be undermined by both the Tour and the Olympic Games.

After making non-committal though positive comments about the balance of the route from the Expo stage, Movistar's Alejandro Valverde was much less ambiguous later as riders mingled with press. “Well, I still haven't finalised my race programme for 2016 yet, it's too early to do that, but I'd say that given the time between the end of the Tour and the Rio Olympics, that the Tour looks like the best preparation for Rio, the Giro is too early.

“Also, this year (2015), finishing on the Tour podium was something I always wanted to do, an ambition I've had for many years. Now that has been achieved I think in 2016 I'll be much more relaxed, not thinking about the GC, but going to help Nairo (Quintana).” And preparing, quite clearly, for the Rio road race.

#### Double trouble

Valverde's frank analysis is likely to be shared by most of the other serious contenders and the fact that Alberto Contador's bold attempt to do a Giro-Tour double came up short will merely have confirmed that such an undertaking is very high risk.

That is not to say it couldn't be done, but the required combination of two 'easy' Grand Tour routes, good weather, two strong teams for each race, unbending motivation, a dose of luck and super form make it unlikely. Recall that the last Giro-Tour double was achieved by Marco Pantani in 1998 at the height of the EPO era.

When news was announced that Contador was going to attempt the Giro-Tour double in 2015, Vincenzo Nibali's trainer Paolo Slongo said that he would be watching the outcome closely, suggesting beforehand that it would be a big ask but that he and Nibali had also been toying with the idea.



Stage 20 of the 2016  
Giro will traverse  
the mighty Col de la  
Bonette in France

Michele Acquarone

# The dark side of Giro politics

That the Giro d'Italia has dragged itself into the 21st century in recent years is beyond debate. In terms of its global media profile and the technology employed in its coverage of the race, the Giro has improved massively. One of the architects behind this modernising drive was race director Michele Acquarone, who joined RCS Sport in late 2008 but only took over the senior position of race director in July of 2011.

Having seen his work starting to pay off however, in October 2013 Acquarone found himself caught up in a scandal which cost him his job and left him looking like he was involved in a massive 17 million euro fraud. Astonishingly, Acquarone had reported what looked like fraud and theft of funds to senior management who promptly suspended him and, ultimately, sacked him, in spite of the fact it was him who had flagged up a crime. Needless to say Acquarone is angry and bewildered.

According to Acquarone, after he raised the alarm with RCS Media, the parent group of RCS Sport, an investigation took place. "From what I understand by reading the audit and the investigation reports, the money was taken from the bank accounts of these satellite companies at RCS Sport which run the marathon, golf

and other events. These accounts would have had little money because the whole business was managed directly and centrally by RCS Sport."

## Disappeared

It seems clear from information available that there was a serious fraud taking place – a serious fraud which was clear enough to both an accountant and the bank to have noticed. Yet nothing was done until Acquarone raised the issue.

"The money was transferred from RCS Media Group to these accounts and then disappeared. The illegal withdrawals began in 2006 and then they increased year by year. In the final months before I reported the problem about 100,000 euros a week was leaving the accounts. For eight years the money was moved to these satellite accounts and then disappeared. Until, in the middle of September 2013, a young controller from RCS Media Group came to me and showed me a falsified bank statement, so together we gave the alarm. When the story broke in the media and questions were being asked, he was immediately moved to another position and moved aside." Two months after Acquarone reported the losses, he was sacked.

"The Director of the bank (where all bank accounts of RCS Sport were) said that on April 2012 she warned the Treasury of RCS Media Group that huge amounts of money were leaving the accounts," explains Acquarone. "The treasury didn't warn me, nor did the treasury sound the alarm. Between 2012 and 2013 almost 10 million euros disappeared." In the two years since news of the fraud broke, RCS Media has made no official comment on the scandal and Acquarone has been hung out to dry both by his former employers and the Italian justice system.

## Glacial

You would have thought that the apparently fraudulent disappearance of 17 million euros would have generated serious investigation. But in Italy justice moves slowly, often to the point where the original law breakers 'escaped' thanks to the statute of limitations running out.

"I have nothing to hide and I will always keep fighting," said Acquarone. Might it be that nobody in Italy is interested in seeing justice done — and RCS Media humiliated — if someone else can be scapegoated and expected to fade, quietly, into the background? Now that would be criminal.

That Contador failed in his stated goal probably went a long way to convincing Slongo that such a double in this era would be very difficult to pull off. Which inescapable fact means that the Giro will almost always play second fiddle to the Tour de France when it comes to attracting the biggest names in the sport.

As the transfer dust settled, it was clear that Trek new signing Ryder Hesjedal would be leading the squad in Italy, while Sky had enticed Mikel Landa with the promise of a shot of leading a team in the Giro. Astana with Nibali and Fabio Aru, has some tough management calls to make. But, this being the Giro, someone unexpected will make it on to the podium. Which is what always makes the Giro a great race.

## Giro 2016

There was no shortage of expert eyes considering the 2016 route, though with little time to reflect on the details, few were ready to commit to definitive statements. Erik Breukink, now a sport director with the Dutch Pro-Conti

Roompot team (a holiday home company) was on hand, hoping for a wildcard offer from the organisers.

Breukink wore the maglia rosa several times in his career, with a best finish of second in 1988. "I know people are talking about the danger of crosswinds in Holland. After what happened in the Tour in 2015, that's normal, but the truth is that down in that part of Holland, crosswinds shouldn't really be a problem. We're well away from the North sea. Of course if the wind does blow. Well, it could be interesting."

Charly Wegelius, the sport director at Garmin when Ryder Hesjedal won the Giro in 2012, had his attention snagged by the 40km Chianti time trial on stage nine. "I think that could turn out to be a lot like the one that Rigoberto Uran did well in. It's the longest time trial on the race and it will be really important, before we go into the mountains. I don't think there will be a metre of flat on it and it'll set the tone for the rest of the race."

When it comes to 'not a metre of flat' the mini mountain time trial on stage 15 at Alpe di Suisi, a mere 10.8km, could

**Top right:** Wacky race, starts in Holland, goes up highest climb in France

**Right:** Hesjedal and race winner Contador in 2015 Giro d'Italia

negate any gains made in the 40km TT. Judging pace on such a short effort could be tricky. It's easy to lose a lot of time in a short uphill test.

## Strong climbers

Speaking of mountains, the geography of Italy lends itself to epic final weeks. You might also argue that the Tour has copied the Giro's approach, eschewing the final transitional stages that take the French peloton up to Paris and simply flying them to a Paris suburb the day after the final mountain stage.

"You need a different team to race and win the Giro," explained Fabrizio Guidi of Cannondale-Garmin, "you need a different shape of team than you do in the Tour where there are more flat stages and the climbs are not so steep."

“Because there are so many climbs in the Giro, you need a team of climbers more than anything else. Look at Astana in 2015. But the teams need to be strong enough for the flatter stages too.”

As has become normal for the Giro, the final week sees a concentration of the terrain that will decide the final wearer of the maglia rosa when the race finishes in Turin on May 29. From stage 13 onwards, the roads seem to point either up or down and any sprinters who make it through the final



**“You need a different team to win the Giro”**

*Fabrizio Guidi*

week deserve special recognition, although the 'gruppo' gets some respite on stages 17 and 18 before a final sort out in the Alps.

At the presentation, the reaction to the final two short (161km and 134km), savage mountain stages was wary but the main concern wasn't so much the steepness, but rather the altitude.

On stage 20, in only 150km between Guillestre in France and Sant'Anna di Vinadio, the Giro will cross one of the highest paved roads on mainland Europe — the col de la Bonette — which, at 2,715 meters offers the real possibility of being a meteorological test.

Three weeks into a national tour, riders being snow-lashed at almost 3,000 meters is something you hope the organisers have considered.

The descent off the south side of la Bonette is far from being a smooth motorway either.

But whoever makes it to the summit finish of Sant'Anna di Vinadio wearing the maglia rosa shouldn't have too much trouble with the final stage between Cuneo and Turin, a 150km stage which finishes with eight laps of a city centre circuit. Let's hope it doesn't rain there either.

# Martin flies the nest

Dan Martin is at a crossroads in his career. At 29 he still has his best years ahead of him and his move from Garmin-Cannondale to Flemish superteam Etixx-Lidl is a clear statement of his desire to win big again

Words Kenny Pyde Photos Graham Watson, Yuzuru Sunada

**C**ycling is talked about as a team sport, even if, in the end, it's invariably one rider who gets the plaudits and the rewards. We've all heard too of riders saying what a massive satisfaction it is to be part of a winning team. But I suspect that, deep down, we've all wondered if it was possible to feel a real sense of pleasure and satisfaction from playing a minor part in a big race win in such an individual sport.

When you hear a rider like Dan Martin – the winner of two bona fide Classic monuments of cycling – say that he hankered after that collective feeling of success, you realise that the wish to be part of a winning team is a genuine, cherished desire, not simply some kind of corporate team-building baloney.

Martin is an established rider, a known quantity, it wasn't like he needed a stellar year to boost his contract options, so from the 29-year-old's point of view, it wasn't so much about "choosing a team" as he puts it but rather "finding a team that wants to work with you.

"I was looking for the same sort of attitude that I found at Slipstream back in 2007. I had offers from French teams saying 'Oh yeah, you can ride as a stagiaire and we'll see' or you had Slipstream who had been following me for two years and always showing an interest.

"Every time my contract was up, (Etixx boss) Patrick (Lefevere) had asked what my plans were, so he's had a long-standing interest in my career. There's a bit of excitement from both parties about working together.

"Plus, after all the bad luck I feel I've had over





Dan Martin in  
Garmin-Cannondale  
2015 colours: Martin  
has ridden for the  
same team since  
turning pro in 2007

the past two years, it's good to turn the page, it's a fresh start I have a craving for."

### On the radar

Martin's had more than his fair share of bad luck in the last two years. A crash in the final turn of Liege-Bastogne-Liege in 2014, being brought off in the same race this year, caught up in a high-speed shunt at the Vuelta, the Belfast Giro d'Italia team time trial get-off, to name the most notable lows.

But the fact is that Garmin-Cannondale did not have a great 2015 season. Inevitably and increasingly the team looked to Martin for wins, though often without the muscle to back up the Irishman when things got lively.

In the 2015 Volta a Catalunya, Martin looked as strong as eventual winner Richie Porte of Team Sky. Garmin, however, looked like a collection of individuals riding their own race who just happened to be wearing the same jerseys.

Martin disagrees: "Garmin has always given me 100 per cent support, but cycling has changed so much in the last few years – and so have I.

"I've gone from being the underdog who wasn't on anybody's mind at the start of races to actually being 'Shit, Dan Martin isn't in the first group here, let's ride as hard as we can to get rid of him' kind of guy.

"And that's changed the dynamics of a race for me, if I'm out of position, other teams try to take advantage and, in the end, the only way you can always guarantee being in position every single time is by having a really strong team around you.

"That's changed in recent seasons and we've gotten away with it a few times. A team like Etixx is far more experienced when it comes to those situations. Garmin is a very young, talented squad that maybe lacks a little of that kind of experience and that can count against you in some race situations."

### To Flanders

In any sport, there are 'badge-kissing' mercenaries: riders and players who will flit from team to team, conjuring up smoke and mirrors to keep the contracts coming, caring little for the ethos or the team or even their prospects of winning anything, so long as the salary arrives on time.

True, it's an attitude far more prevalent in football, but those characters exist in pro cycling too. Just stay close and friendly with the right people, say the right things and keep your head down. Martin is not one of those riders. He is a long, long way from cashing in his chips and living on his past wins with a big new contract.

For Martin, his move to Etixx does seem to be about working out the best way of exploiting his peak physical years, rather than seeing out his time with an indulgent sponsor.



**"I beat Geraint before. It was in the junior Tour of Wales"**  
*Martin on Geraint Thomas*

"I'm definitely getting into my best years as a rider now and it's important that I take advantage of that, which is where the change of environment comes in, as well as a move to a team that frequently wins races."

"I don't know how many races Etixx won in 2015, it's a hell of a lot (54 compared to Garmin's 11) and that winning environment is something that maybe I crave to be a part of. Hopefully being part of that sort of environment will rub off on me."

Martin, who was always happy to declare himself a 'give it a lash' kind of a rider, seemed well-suited to the Garmin racing philosophy, a buccaneering, seat-of-the-chamois attitude.

But that approach, while still attractive, isn't quite as efficacious as it was four or five years ago. In the past, Martin would (un-maliciously) take the mickey out of Team Sky for being uber-serious, but it seems that the joke has worn thin.

In fact, such has been the change in global cycling and in Martin himself, that he reveals he seriously contemplated a move to Team Death Star.

**Above:** Martin will be hoping for less crashes on one of the peloton's most respected teams



"I don't know how serious negotiations became, but yeah, Sky was definitely an option, purely because I was craving being part of one of the best teams in the world."

"I mean, I'm 29 and I'm coming to realise that I probably won't ever win the Tour de France, but even to be part of the winning team? That would be incredible and that was one of the things that was in the back of my mind if I did go to Sky, where I could have that opportunity," explains Martin.

But of course Etixx-Lidl isn't exactly a lightweight outfit and according to Martin, the team will be happy to back his general classification aspirations in a Grand Tour, if that's what is decided and required.

With the departure of Rigoberto Uran (ironically to Cannondale-Garmin), Etixx is looking a bit light on the GC rider front. "Of course Etixx is willing to back me, because they want to see how far I can go. That's really exciting as well, I still want to know how much I can get out of myself."

Martin pauses, briefly, "Maybe I've still got it in me to win a Grand Tour myself? I was never keen on spending a lot of time in Tenerife, up a volcano. But I live up a mountain in Andorra now, so..." laughs Martin.

Given the massive popularity and media attention focused on Grand Tours these days, it is inevitable that a rider of Martin's ability is tempted by the possibilities. With talk of Geraint Thomas orienting himself towards Grand Tours (interview on page 72), Martin can't be deaf to the siren call of the pink, yellow and red jerseys.

"Hmm. You know, I beat Geraint in a national tour

before. True, it was the junior Tour of Wales, but I've still got that over him," chuckles Martin, before adding, "I don't think I'll ever be a rider who just focuses on one Grand Tour, I just don't think I could, because I love racing too much, you know?"

"I like going to every race and thinking about trying to win. I'm not someone who tries to win a race to tick a box and think 'OK, done that'."

"I'm someone who likes to race on the day, I just turn the page, go on to the next race and then come back the next year and try to win again."

**Above:** Martin with Bradley Wiggins. Moving to Team Sky was an attractive idea at one time  
**Below:** Martin is proud to represent Ireland



### Tour pitfalls

That Martin is moving into the high summer of his career can be deduced from the fact that although he won less in 2015 and his ranking has slipped, he had more solid top 10 results than at any point in his career. The baseline has moved up, his consistency and durability have improved — a sure sign of a physically mature rider.

The mental commitment required to focus on one race — whether the Tour de France or Paris-Roubaix — is tricky. In truth, even if you mess up in Flanders, there's always Roubaix or even Gent-Wevelgem or Het Nieuwsblad — a similar race to take the edge off that bitter taste of missing out on the main objective.

A single-minded focus on a Grand Tour is a high-risk strategy, with a high eggs-to-single basket ratio. "I think, in the end, if I win four or five races a year, I can be content with that. It's not winning the Tour de France of course, it's just different. Focusing your whole season on a Grand Tour is a hard thing to do mentally."

Martin has been racing so long — and around racers so long, even growing up — that he has developed a laid-back attitude that surprises some. In the 186km Milan-Turin, new Cannondale-Garmin signing Ryan Mullen was understandably nervous pre-race. As the 21 year old



Mullen rolled to the start line, his DS told him all he expected of him was to try to stay near the front.

"In the race, Ryan came up to me with about 50 kilometers to go and couldn't believe how relaxed I was. All around us people were racing hard and it was still about 25k before the first time up the Superga."

"One of my team mates had sent him back from the front to 'Get Dan' and I was like, 'Ryan no, just chill out, just chill, these are big, wide fast roads into the foot of the climb, we'll just cruise here and we'll move up at the last minute.'"

"In the end we moved up later and I was about 15th at the start of the climb, which was fine. On a five kilometre climb, I'm confident enough in my ability to know that" 

**Above:** Martin (second from left) has raced all his career on the same team

**Right:** In Irish champs colours with team mate David Millar at the 2009 Dauphine-Libre

### 2016 season

## Nervous about the move to Etixx

Inevitably, after nine years racing with Slipsteam in its various incarnations (Garmin, Chipotle, Sharp and the co-sponsors) Martin feels a tiny bit nervous about leaving the comforting familiarity of the groovy Boulder, Colorado team and heading into deepest Flanders.

For all that Etixx boss Patrick Lefevere has been part of the scene for decades, Martin was still curious enough to ask Tony Martin and Nikki Terpstra what life was like on the team.

"It will feel like the first day at a new school, it's going to be interesting. I mean, I've never changed team before! It's true," laughs Martin, "the last time I

went to a training camp where I was the new guy and a new pro was back in winter 2007.

"So I'm going into this new organisation with 60 or 70 personnel and I don't really know anybody's name, even off the bike in normal clothes everybody looks different and of course I'm the new guy, so everybody knows who I am, because I'm the odd one out — 'Oh look, it's the new guy,' although to be honest the only thing I'm really anxious about is how many beers they make me drink as part of my initiation," chuckles Martin, eyes widening with visions of a table full of Duvels and Leffes.

Martin was still to finalise the details

of his race programme for 2016, but he is clearly energised by the prospect of working with a new group. "They know what I can do in the Ardennes and I think the prospect of working with Alaphilippe is great, but Patrick is talking about seeing how far I can go as a Grand Tour rider as well — which is very exciting."

"Since I've moved to Andorra, with the amount of climbing I'm doing now, I'm definitely climbing better, I can feel a difference, so when Patrick is talking about top five, that's something that seems possible. With Patrick, it's never about what I've done in the past, it's about what I can do in the future."



**“With Garmin you tend to get blocked and pushed around more”**

*Martin on bunch life*



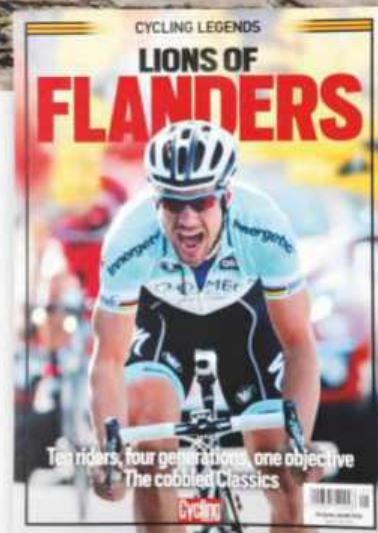
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## Results 2015

Dan Martin (Ir), 29

Team: Cannondale-Garmin

Lives: Andorra

■ 25th overall, Tirreno-Adriatico

■ 10th overall, Volta

Catalunya, 3rd stage three,  
4th stage four

■ 15th Amstel Gold Race

■ 104th overall, Tour de

Romandie

■ 7th overall Criterium du

Dauphine, 6th stage six

■ 39th overall Tour de

France, 2nd stages eight and  
11, 4th stage three

■ 7th Clasica Ciclista San

Sebastian

■ DNF, injured Vuelta a

Espana, 4th stage two, 2nd  
stage six



I can make up any gap. If you save energy by not fighting for your position for 20k before the climb, that's energy you can use on the climb."

Martin reflects again though that this style of racing — his relaxed approach — might change. "Maybe that's something I've had to learn to do at Garmin, maybe it's a style of racing that I've had to get used to because I haven't had — and I don't think the Garmin team gets — that team respect some others get."

"It's like when, say, there are a couple of Sky riders moving up through the bunch, riders are like 'oh, shit' and they get let past. With Garmin that doesn't seem to happen, you tend to get blocked and pushed around more."

With some of the more muscular riders on the Etixx squad riding shotgun to Martin, it's hard to see that happening to the same extent in 2016.

Earlier in his nine year World Tour career, Martin admitted that sometimes he had had a hard time 'bossing' his team mates. Asking them to do those things that are required of designated support riders like going back to the team car for a cape or clothing or food, riding in the wind, closing gaps, that myriad of little energy-saving services supplied by a domestique.

As Martin has matured and won more, his confidence in his own abilities has grown and he seems better prepared to accept his role and responsibilities.

"In the past sometimes it was about saving your team mates legs for later," he reflects, "but confidence is

**"It's important directors trust their riders"**

*Martin on tactics*

important, everyone needs to have confidence in the rest of the team around them, even the directeur sportif in the car. I mean, I think it's important that directors trust their riders.

"At the end of the day, if you are sitting last wheel in the peloton and they are in your ear, on the radio, shouting that you shouldn't be there, surely they should be able to wonder 'Maybe he's there for a reason?' or maybe the rider is looking for a rest, maybe he's quite happy riding there for a bit.

"Every director should have trust and confidence in his riders and he should realise that his riders, deep down, they want to win more than the director does!"

"If they're not in the break, it's not because they didn't want to be in the break, it's because they missed it or were unlucky, they were in the wrong place at the wrong time, they picked the break that was brought back. It wasn't through lack of trying."

"All a rider can do is their best and if you get to the end of a race and you know that you did the best you could, that you gave it your all, you should be happy with that. And so should the team."

**Above:** Stage racing will remain on the Martin hit list



# Winter PIT-STOP



When pro cycling was a resolutely European summer sport, a winter break was part of every rider's year. These days there's a lot less time to do the Christmas shopping

Words Kenny Pryde Photos Andy Jones, Yuzuru Sunada, Graham Watson

**O**nce upon a not-too-distant time, it made sense to talk about 'winter training.' That's because professional cycling was absolutely a European, northern hemisphere centred sport. There were no races of real note anywhere else on the planet, save those that took place in western Europe, in the 'heartlands.'

The season was an uncomplicated thing. It started with southern European training races (the Grand Prix de Cannes, the Grand Prix d'Antibes!) then spring Classics, summer tours, world championships in August, autumn Classics and then it was a case of 'OK it's a wrap, see you on the Cote d'Azur next February.' That was only 30 years ago.

#### Pheasant shoot

Now? Well, things have changed. It was said, apocryphally, perhaps as part of a psychological ruse even, that Irish legend Sean Kelly could turn up at the start of the season with 1,000km of training 'in the bank' and still win Paris-Nice, a race he won seven times in a row between 1982 and 1988.

BMC head of performance Marco Pinotti laughs at such quaint notions. "I'm telling you, forget coming back to win Paris-Nice with 1,000km of training, you'd get dropped in the neutralised zone!"

"In fact if Kelly went to Qatar — never mind Paris-Nice — if he arrived at Qatar with only 1,000km in his legs, he'd be dropped in the neutralised zone. That's a hard race, people don't realise that."

Back in Sean Kelly's heyday, winter was a time to chop logs, shoot some game, jog a bit, eat a lot and ride a little. These days, winter is a time to train in warmer climes and prepare to race a World Tour event, like the Tour Down Under, in January.

And you'd better be lean and fit already, not trying to burn off a few kilos from that brandy butter. But wouldn't racing hard in January mean training seriously in November? Eight weeks, minimum? You better believe it.

The globalisation of cycling has made a mockery of the seasonality of cycling as it was historically constituted. A winter off season? Winter cross training? You might as well call it 'base training' and drop any reference to the time of the year. There's no such thing as a training race anymore. You can go to a race and use it to gain some kind of training effect, but if you actually

want to win it, you'd better be in excellent shape.

#### Full gas

When Chris Froome and Alberto Contador were slugging it out in the Ruta del Sol in February, they were riding as strongly as they would be in Tirreno-Adriatico, but there were psychological points at stake. Neither was simply training and there was more at stake than winning a minor Spanish stage race.

Recognising that the sport has changed is easy, but working out why it has changed and what impact this has had on riders is another matter. Have winter training regimes altered because our understanding of exercise physiology and training principles is more sophisticated or because the expansion in the racing calendar has forced new methods on coaches, riders and teams?

As you read this (assuming you are in the northern hemisphere and it's, say December), what do you imagine that World Tour pro riders are doing? They're hard at it. Holidays? Not so much, because in all likelihood they happened in October to mid-November, though they certainly happened. For all that the life of pro cyclists is a demanding lifestyle, they still need a break.

"For me, I'd say between four and five weeks is required at the end of the season." Says Julien Pinot, coach at FDJ.fr, big brother of Thibaut. "I think it's essential that at the end of the season, which for us was the Tour of Lombardy, the riders need to take a proper break, to give them a chance to recover physically and mentally too, because the guys are under a lot of pressure in the season." And when Pinot is talking about a break, he really means it.

"Take Thibaut for example. He's been racing since the Grand Prix la Marseillaise at the end of January and had a big season with a lot of races and a lot of pressure.

"Kenny (Elissonde) is the same, he was under a lot of pressure this year because he was at the end of his contract and did a lot of races, so for both of them, a real break was needed.

"True, both of them had short breaks programmed into the season, but at the end of the year it is very important to have a proper break. I'd say that if riders don't get a good break it can have a serious impact the following season.

"It does depend on the season a rider has had but really, if someone says that he doesn't even want to



touch his bike for five weeks, that's fine, but more than that, it's more a sign that he's really fatigued.

"A three week break, for me, I'd say is actually too short a duration to recover from a big season of between 80 to 100 race days. Also, it's different for a team rider, but for a team leader who has had a lot of pressure all year, you need to take that stress into consideration too."

#### No loafing

Pinotti is in agreement with Pinot. "Of course training has changed, but even when I started as a pro in 1999, we had four weeks off the bike to recover, I think maybe when you go back 30 years ago, that was an era when riders took a big break and didn't do much. Now, if there are riders on the squad racing in the Tour San Luis or in Down Under, they are training in early November and by mid-December they'll be doing quite intense work."

But let's not get carried away. Four or five weeks off the bike doesn't mean five weeks of lying about in your underpants, eating nachos and enjoying binge sessions of TV box sets. Four or five weeks off the bike, but a rider should still get out the house, maybe play football, jogging, hiking, whatever.

On a more serious note, nor are a great many riders as chemically assisted as they once were. There's not even the same recourse to medicalised, injectable 'recovery' products either. So that recuperation period is crucial, as, indeed, are

**"The idea of a winter break is a frightening prospect"**

*Tim Kerrison*

those in-season breaks.

"Riders do break up their season in ways that didn't happen in the past," insists Pinot, "a two week break in the middle of the season isn't an issue now. Even five or six years





ago, teams didn't really allow their riders to stop during the season, which was madness.

"What complicates our season is the fact that, together with AG2R, we've also got to race and support the French domestic programme as well as the World Tour, which is hard for everyone, because we are obliged to race."

#### Non-stop

Racing at World Tour level — where there are no easy races because there's always someone or some team wanting to score points or prove points — takes its toll, but it's the price to be paid. Tim Kerrison, head of performance at Team Sky makes a cruel but telling point when it comes to time off or taking a long break.

"You know, for me it's a bit of a frightening concept, that idea (of a winter break) because for people trying to be the best at something — and I'm not just talking about bike riders — it's a full-time thing, you don't have six months off or three months off."

"People keep saying 'Oh the winter is getting shorter' and sure, everyone deserves a bit of a break, in whatever job they do but when you are trying to be the best at whatever you are doing, it's a continual process."

Kerrison, an Australian now working in the northern hemisphere, has little attachment to the idea of following European seasons. "Rather than associating a break with the seasons, there's a race season that follows the race

## Training then and now

THEN	NOW
Your season ended with the Tour of Lombardy, October 4	Your season never ends. It's November 5 and you're racing stage seven in the Tour of Taihau Lake in China
You wrap up like an Eskimo and try not to crash on ice	You work on your core stability in the gym with a personalised programme
The Etoile de Besseges kicks off in Le Vigan. Average temperature, 9 degrees, average speed, 36kph	Tour de San Luis, Argentina, average temperature 25 degrees, average speed, 42kph



calendar I guess. There's a relatively short period of time between the last race of this season and the first race of the next, which is the natural time, the obvious time to have a little bit of a break, to assess things and rebuild.

"But really, for the guys who are trying to develop into Grand Tour riders, that requires constant development and if at the end of every season you are having enough time off to go back to where you started then you are not going to progress. You move forward, then you go back to where you were."

Lest Kerrison be thought of as some kind of old school Stakhanovite slave driver, he is at pains to point out that rest is important, adding, "It's really important to get that balance right of rest and progression."

"We need to look very carefully at what each individual needs to do to recharge their batteries and I think quite often the guys who ride at this level love riding their bikes and don't want to take extended periods off the bike."

#### Bike centred

The phenomenon of riders riding their bikes a lot and enjoying doing so is something that Pinotti is familiar with too. "I think the days when riders did a lot of different things — running or hiking or whatever — are over, they have less time to do that now compared to 10 or 20 years ago. Even in winter, training has become more bike-specific. Plus, to some extent, riding a bike is safe. When you

**Above left:** Sky's Boassen Hagen and Ian Stannard brave the cold on a team spin in 2013

**Below left:** BMC coach Marco Pinotti (left) with ex-champion Paulo Bettini

run or hike or play tennis, the first few times you do that, it hurts!"

The fact is that world class bike riders need guidance and reassurance. They are as concerned as any committed amateur about their fitness draining away if they leave the bike in the shed for a while. "I don't think they're worried, but they know that if they stop riding... it does!" laughs Kerrison. "But, again, it's about getting the balance right. You do need to give the body a rest and an opportunity to reset and recover."

Like Pinot, Kerrison isn't too worried if a rider decides to park the bike for a while. "At the right time of year, no, that wouldn't worry me. If it went beyond a certain point, then it would, but most of them wouldn't do that anyway."

"And it depends what you mean by 'off the bike' really. If they're going to do some mountain biking or 'cross or running and walking in the mountains then fine, no problem at all. If someone was sitting around eating chocolate and playing on their Playstation for six weeks, that would be a problem. But they wouldn't be riding at

Tim Kerrison (right) is a hands-on coach



## "The days when riders did different things are over"

*Pinotti on cross-training*

Julien Pinot is the coach with FDJ.fr



World Tour level if that's how they were managing themselves."

In the end, it still makes sense to call it winter training since winter — albeit a northern hemisphere winter — does coincide with a significant lull in hostilities. More than that, winter is the only time when riders get a real chance to assess their weaknesses.

"It's the only period of the year where you can work on a rider's weaknesses, when you can have a structured programme. Once the season starts, it's much harder for riders to get to the gym to work on core training. You can work on other imbalances or train certain qualities and capacities."

In this new world order though, everyone is winning, so to speak. In modern cycling, an experienced pro will, on average, race for between 70 and 80 days. Even as recently as 25 years ago, 100-plus days of racing were common.

Exhausted riders needed to stay off their bikes to try to recover, where a modern rider, with fewer race days and a more structured training and race programme, should be in better condition, with the benefit of a longer career.

"If you look at it, Bernard Hinault retired at the age of 32 and Laurent Fignon was about the same age too," says Kerrison. "Now in many cases we consider that a rider is at his physical peak at those sorts of ages. This is partly because they race less during the season and a rider at 34 or 36 years old can still be competitive."

When it comes to modern winter training then, there's good news and bad news. The upside is that you stand a better chance of having a longer career and staying healthy. The downside? You're going to need to do some pretty ugly interval training in December.

END



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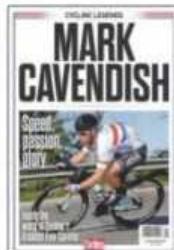
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# *The* **London** **Six**

The return of a six-day race to London brings back memories of the fabled Skol Six which, 35 years ago, thrilled big crowds with some of the finest road pros of the era

Words Nick Bull  
Photos Cycle Sport archive



Saitama, October 2015. Just days after next year's Tour de France route was announced in Paris, some of the sport's biggest names took part in an exhibition criterium race around the Japanese city.

Enthusiastic fans, four and five-deep in places, line-up around the course to catch a glimpse of riders such as Chris Froome, John Degenkolb and Joaquim Rodriguez. In the preceding days, many politely queued up at one of the local, luxurious hotels to get autographs and pictures with the stars of the sport.

"Sometimes fans can be quite abrupt at races, but here they were just all so polite," said Geraint Thomas during his 2013 visit there. It's remarkably far removed from the road racers' off-season of days gone by, when many took refuge on the six-day scene.

Compare the orderly scenes in Japan to those at the Skol 6, held at London's Wembley Arena in 1977, when Eddy Merckx was among those riding. Competing against emerging German star Didi Thurau in a four-race omnium separate from the main event, fans were so in awe of the Cannibal that they throw autograph books from the grandstands and over the tracks for Merckx to sign from track centre.

'Eddy didn't mind signing, but with a finger at his temple, he indicated the stupidity in even remotely endangering riders who were on the track at the time,' wrote Alan Gayfer for *Cycling* magazine's coverage of his star turn.

While the then 32-year-old was in the twilight of his career (his last Tour de France win came three years earlier), that he and other big-name road riders would head to London to compete on the track in their road off-season says a lot about the power of the sixes of yesteryear.

Remember, two years ago, Etixx-Quick Step manager Patrick Lefevere's refused to let Mark Cavendish race in the Gent Six. "We pay him to perform on the road, and he must fully concentrate on that," he said at the time. "On the first day of the Gent Six two riders crashed. What if one of them had been Mark?"

To this day, organisers love high-profile road stars competing in their six-days. Cavendish got his way with Lefevere in 2014, and rode in Gent and Zurich. The benefits of his participation to the former's promoter were notable.

"With Cavendish's participation, we had a lot of publicity in the newspapers and on TV beforehand," said Gent organiser Patrick Sercu, the most decorated six-day racer of all time. That helped and everyone wanted to come. He brings the public and an atmosphere to Gent."

#### Special guest stars

Although the London Six dates back to 1878, the Merckx and Thurau contest at the 1977 Skol 6 was billed as part of that incarnation of the event's 10th anniversary celebrations.



It also served two greater purposes. For Merckx, it formed part of his unofficial farewell tour. He competed in over a dozen sixes that winter, before eventually retiring in May 1978. Furthermore, his presence was as good a boost for ticket sales as promoter Ron Webb could have hoped for. The omnium (comprising a sprint, points race, three-kilometre pursuit and 50-lap Derny race) took place on a Monday night: ask any theatre, concert or sports promoter, and they'll most likely tell you it's the toughest day of the week to get people out on.

'Monday night of the [Skol] Six is usually a quiet night, if such a word can be used for any session fought out to the Wembley roar. But there is no question of that now with a match that will surely set the Wembley Pool alight,' read *Cycling* magazine's reaction to the confirmation of the match-up taking place. With the most expensive tickets costing just £2 (around £13 in today's money), the famous venue was close to a sell-out come the big event.

Merckx headed to London immediately after riding the GP Isbergues the previous day; two hours before the meeting began, he rode around the Wembley boards, reportedly lapping 'steadily at around 32mph behind a Derny.

"My legs were stiff and heavy," he said. "If I was going to put up a creditable performance I had to loosen them up, and get used to the new track at the same time."

When he circled the track before the first race against Thurau, Gayfer noted a welcome 'such is normally

## "My legs were stiff and heavy. If I was going to put up a creditable performance I had to loosen them up"

*Eddy Merckx comes to London*

reserved for great conductors or great opera artistes.'

Thurau was already a star in his own right by then, having led that year's Tour de France for several days and won four stages. The German won the sprint competition, but Merckx claimed the points race, pursuit (despite looking 'laboured') and Derny event to take the overall victory. 'The crowd stamped, shouted, hooted, blasted and whistled its approval.

'Gone was the anxious frown from Merckx's handsome face, he was the darling of the crowd and he loved it,' observed Gayfer. 'They bayed for Eddy throughout like men possessed. Thurau was ignored, the 7,000 just had eyes for their idol.'

### **Big Jan**

Thurau garnered far more attention at Wembley two years later, when he returned for another two-man omnium. That year's Giro d'Italia winner (and current Lampre-Merida team manager) Giuseppe Saronni was scheduled to face Jan Raas, who was coming towards the end of a fantastic season that included wins in the World Championship road race, the Tour of Flanders, Amstel Gold and a Tour de France stage.

However, the Italian injured his knee at the Catalonia Tour in the weeks beforehand and had to pull out. Thurau's unscheduled cameo appearance only became public when 'a figure in a white suit appeared at the top of the stairs leading into the track centre,' *Cycling* magazine reported that the crowd responded with an "ooh" upon his unveiling. Not that fan support helped him out against the Dutchman. Classily wearing a rainbow jersey and plain black shorts (the latter's only blemish was the excusable TI-RALEIGH writing in white towards the bottom of his left leg), Raas took the victory by one point.

And whereas the results of many similar, exhibition-style races over the years have been known to be pre-determined beforehand (Saitama, anyone?), this tête-à-tête wasn't. 'There were those who muttered about putting on a good show, making it look good, but there were those who saw Thurau hitting his bars with frustration as he slowed down, and reasoned he would have loved to have beaten his former team-mate in front of Raleigh executives on their home ground,' wrote Gayfer.

### **Apples and pears**

The Skol 6 was well-placed to attract road riders. Taking place in September, at a time when the road season was considerably shorter than in the modern era, it was the first on the six-day calendar.

"Racing in London was very nice," Sercu recalled on the eve of the recent Six-Day London, the first event of its kind in the capital since 1980. While known for his unmatched



tally of 88 six-day wins, he wasn't exclusively a track star, winning multiple Tour and Giro stages during his career. "It was September and the programme wasn't too long — it was only 6pm until midnight — and we would spend the afternoon out in the sun.

"It was very different from other [six-day] races, like in Germany, which were much longer. You had to be on the track for 15 hours a day."

Tom Simpson was announced as one of the headline riders for the first Skol 6 early on in 1967, which took place at the now-closed Earls Court. Because of print schedules, he appeared in a *Cycling* magazine editorial piece promoting the event (he was listed as 'the jester', with Peter Post described as 'the king') in the July 15 issue later that year — two days after he died on Mont Ventoux.

Former Paris-Roubaix winner Post teamed up with Sercu to win the 1968 Skol, the first to take place at Wembley, which used a 160-metre track that was owned by promoter Webb, kept inside the arena when not being used and requiring new timber for the bankings each time it was assembled.

In his review of the event for *International Cycle Sport* magazine, journalist John Wilcockson wrote: 'The magnificent Post more than lived up to reputation as 'King of the Sixes', superbly combining the qualities of the showman with those of the athlete. It is difficult to see who will emerge as his successor when he eventually retires. Among the four Belgians in the race Patrick Sercu and Theo Verschueren stand out as the most likely to follow in Post's wheelmarks.' Post won 65 Sixes in total, which Sercu equalled in London in 1979.

### **Gold dust**

Sercu and Post also won in 1969, 1970 and 1971, before the former placed second in the 1972 edition with

**Above:** Bunny Girls were a glamourous treat to a Seventies crowd of bike fans

**Left:** First night on September 20 of the 1967 Skol 6

**Below left:** Dutch World RR champion Jan Raas at the Skol Six



**Clockwise from above:** 160 high power floodlights were used to light Earls Court for the 1967 Skol 6; Plenty of advertising in the Sixties; Suits, ties and a flat cap for a Sixties big night out

somebody who may seem an unlikely partner for such an event.

In his programme notes, Webb wrote: 'To maintain the very high standard of the racing and keep the Skol 6 at the forefront of the world's sporting events, it is necessary for us to continually seek new stars among the elite of Europe's professional cyclists.'

'This year, we bring for the first time, Italy's Gianni Motta. For many years an idol in his own country, he is a road racing cyclist with an exceptional record in continental events, a past winner of the Giro d'Italia and 3rd in the Tour de France, his exploits in these and other great road classics are legend.'

Yet for his reputation as a famed climber (as confirmed by his palmarès that also included wins in the Tours of Romandy and Switzerland), he also won a handful of six-days, including Milan (with Rik Van Steenbergen and Post), and Montreal with British track specialist Tony Gowland. Motta tended to limit his six-day participation, but his decision to ride in London followed his non-selection for the Italian national team for that year's World's in Barcelona, won by compatriot Felice Gimondi.

Multiple Grand Tour stage winner Gerben Karstens and Dutchman Leo Duyndam took the win, 389 points to 317 (before leaving immediately afterward to catch a 5am ferry from Dover in an attempt to get home as quickly as

### Volatile chef

## Man with the meat cleaver

One person lesser known in the Skol 6 story is behind some of the most memorable stories from the event's history. Dutch chef Jan Heil was responsible for ensuring the 22 riders, as well as the soigneurs, mechanics and event staff were kept fed and watered.

His popular dishes included veal cordon, and the Dutch uitsmijter dish — an open-faced ham and egg

sandwich. *Cycling* magazine in 1979 reported Sercu occasionally requested steak tartare sandwiches between races, while Heil's special lunchtime offering was a fish-and-steak dish.

But what made Heil so memorable was his unpredictable temperament. "He once chased one of the riders around with a meat cleaver," recalled London-born six-day racer Maurice Burton.

Rumour had it that the rider in question was Peter Post. The aforementioned magazine also reported that he once 'certainly cooled off another rider's high spirits by tipping a tray of crème caramel all over him.'

Nonetheless, his cooking must have been up-to-scratch: Heil was also the chef at the Maastricht, Rotterdam, Herning and Vienna sixes.



possible) after denying Sercu and Motta in their attempts to gain a lap in the final, frantic Madison.

Described by Post, who by then held the position of race director, as worthy winners, he added, with seemingly no hint of gloating: "some people may say that Motta held back Sercu, but that's not true. Gianni is a great rider and he gave everything he had in that final Madison. I thought he rode a fantastic race."

#### Farewell laps

Merckx's involvement in the Skol Omnium was his sole participation in any London six, although it very much started the countdown to his retirement. The same can be said of Barry Hoban's appearance at Wembley in 1979.

The Yorkshireman placed 10th in that year's Skol 6, riding with Dutchman Martin Venix, but received a welcome that befitted a home favourite. '[He shared] the limelight of Skol 6 winners Sercu and Fritz with a last lap of honour,' reported *Cycling* magazine. 'He did not have a good six with Venix...it was sad that [he] could not have had a more auspicious farewell.'

And while the chances of those who now head to Saitama would start bringing the curtain down on their careers at a six-day, Bradley Wiggins could emulate Merckx and Hoban come the end of next year.

"The likelihood is that I'll retire in December 2016, rather than stop in Rio [at the Olympics]," he said recently. "I'd like to come back and do events like the London and Gent Six. I'd like to go back to Gent because it will be 18 years since I first rode it, so I'd love to go back. I'd be completing the circle, if you like."

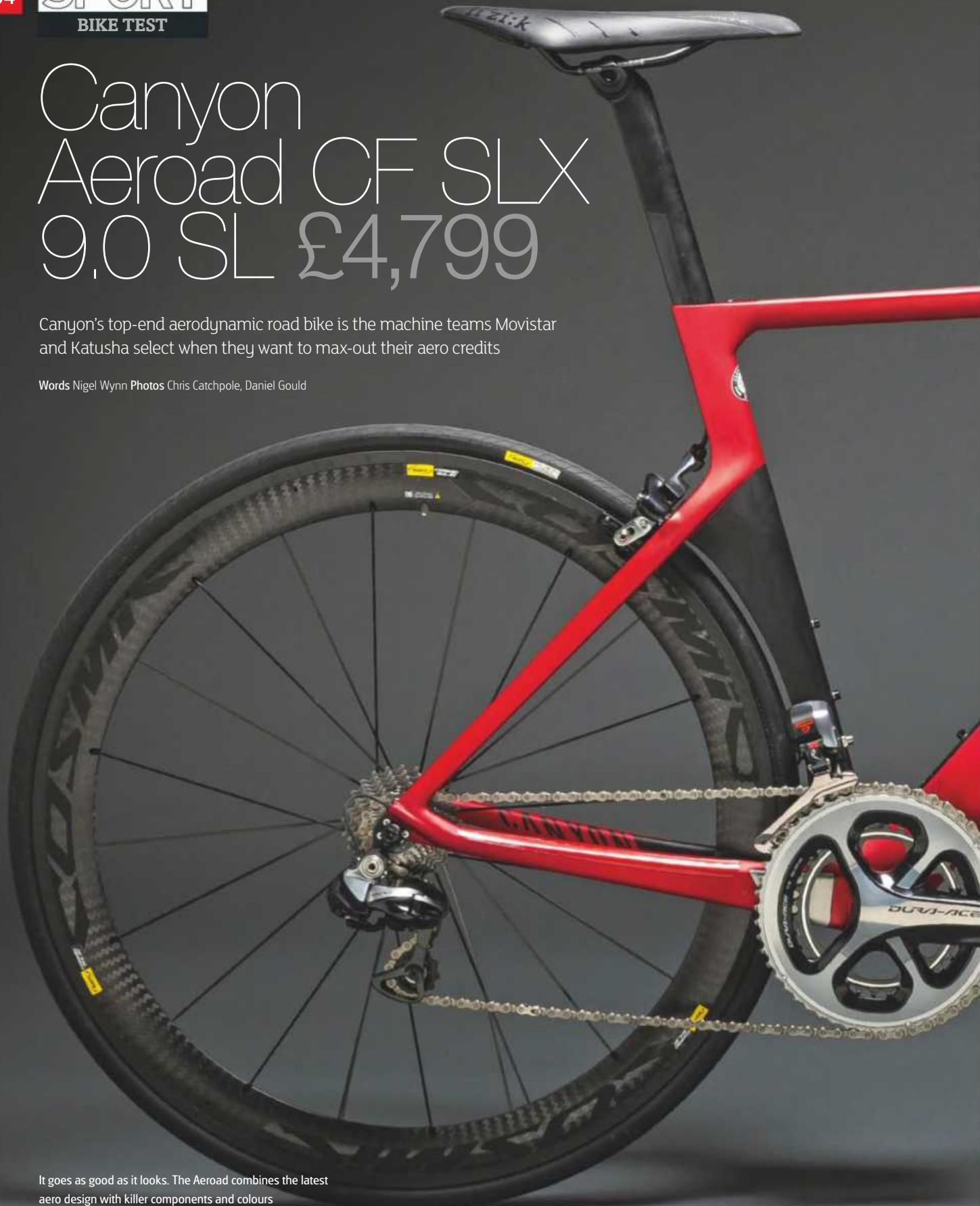


Peter Post was a six-day legend at the Skol 6

# Canyon Aeroad CF SLX 9.0 SL £4,799

Canyon's top-end aerodynamic road bike is the machine teams Movistar and Katusha select when they want to max-out their aero credits

Words Nigel Wynn Photos Chris Catchpole, Daniel Gould



It goes as good as it looks. The Aeroad combines the latest aero design with killer components and colours



**Frameset** Canyon Aerofit CF SLX

carbon-fibre

**Fork** Canyon Aeroblade SLX

carbon-fibre

**Gears** Shimano Dura-Ace 11-25t

**Brakes** Shimano Dura-Ace

**Chainset** Shimano Dura-Ace

52/36t

**Wheels** Mavic Cosmic Pro Carbon

Exalith WTS

**Tyres** Mavic Yksion Pro, 700c x 23c

**Handlebar** Canyon H11

Aerocockpit carbon-fibre

**Stem** Canyon H11 Aerocockpit

carbon-fibre

**Saddle** Fizik Arione R5

**Seatpost** Canyon S27 Aero VCLS CF

**Size range** 2XS, XS, S, M, L, XL, 2XL

**Weight** 6.935kg/15.29lbs

**Size tested** M

[www.canyon.com](http://www.canyon.com)

**C**anyon has arguably been more successful than any other brand at the top level of professional cycle sport. The 2015 season ended with both Canyon-sponsored teams Movistar and Katusha placing first and second in the World Tour team rankings, with Movistar's Alejandro Valverde topping the World Tour individual rider rankings.

Add to that the fact that Katusha's Alexander Kristoff won more races than anyone else in 2015 and you have a very powerful argument in favour of the German brand's high performance bikes and savvy marketing.

Both Valverde and Kristoff's bike of choice from the Canyon line-up is the Aeroad CF SLX, Canyon's top-end aerodynamic road racing machine. We got hold of a 2016 Aeroad CF SLX 9.0 to find out what makes this bike such a winner.

### Frameset

There are few road bikes that look as stunning as the Aeroad. Its flowing lines are a triumph of aesthetics and aerodynamics. The way the fork and stem integrate seamlessly with the headtube at the front end is stunning, and those clean lines run all the way down to the back end. The curved spar between the bottom bracket, which runs up to the low seatstays not only looks great, it also provides an aero fairing for the rear wheel.

Although it is also available in stealth-like all black, our model came in glow red, which accentuates the frame's lines — particularly the black section of the seat tube which almost makes the seatstays look like they are floating in mid-air.

All of the cabling is internal, as you would expect. There are no ugly Shimano Di2 batteries or control units on show as both are neatly concealed within the frame and stem respectively.

### Components

Shimano's Dura-Ace Di2 groupset has set the standard for electronic shifting. Clever auto-trimming of the rear derailleur ensures that shifts are lightning fast and clatter-free every time. The SFX 9.0 also comes with sprinter buttons situated in the inside edge of the bars so that you

can shift when on the drops. The only thing the groupset leaves you to worry about is the battery's charge and drivetrain lubrication.

Canyon's Aerocockpit one-piece stem and bar system keeps all the cabling and Di2 brain tucked away. Canyon's own-brand seatpost is designed to fit the non-standard internal dimensions of the seat-tube — although the stem and bars can be changed for any commonly-available parts, the seatpost cannot be swapped with any other brand.

Canyon has elected to stick with a traditional seatstay, rather than under the chainstay position, for the direct-mount Shimano Dura-Ace brake calipers.

### Wheels

Mavic's venerable Cosmic Pro wheelset provides the deep-section rotating elements of the bike, and they are very much in keeping with the rest of the machine. If the Cosmics aren't your thing, then Canyon offers the bike with Mavic CXR Ultimate or Zipp 404 Firestrike wheels in its CF SLX 9.0 Team (£5,199) and LTD (£6,699) configurations respectively.

The wheels are shod with Mavic's Yksion tyres in (now) skinny 23mm width, and there's just about enough room in the frame to accommodate 25mm tyres. Fitting fatter tyres would improve the bike's comfort level over rougher roads, although we were impressed that such a stiff bike was far from brutal even on rough tarmac.

The smooth-shifting, fast and silent running of the Aeroad made for an eerily smooth ride quality. It was easy to gather pace and maintain speed over longer distances.

Aero bikes sometimes come with a weight penalty. Indeed, the Aeroad is not as light as Nairo Quintana's preferred Canyon model, the Ultimate. However, an all-up weight of 6.9kg (15.2lbs) is still impressive, and helps make the bike a very decent climber too. This is aided by Canyon's speccing of a semi-compact chainset (52/36t) with an 11-25t cassette.

This is a pro-spec bike that is very easy to live with and looks as fantastic as it rides. Factor in the class-beating retail price, and there really is nothing to fault the Aeroad CF SLX 9.0 in any way.

END

## The Canyon story

Given Canyon's current level of success in pro racing it would be easy to forget that the company is still relatively in its infancy, particularly in comparison to old hands such as Bianchi, with their 130-year history.

Founded by brothers Roman and Franc Arnold at the beginning of the 2000s, Canyon's direct-selling to customers of well-priced, well-specced road, mountain and time trial bikes has seen them grow into a large international brand.

Bikes are built up, packaged and sent off around the world from Canyon's base in Koblenz, Germany. It's a far cry from the Arnold brothers' original business of buying and selling bike parts out of a small trailer.

The company's road bike range now includes models for all kinds of rider in four model lines — Inflite, Endurace, Ultimate and Aeroad — in addition to its Speedmax time trial bike.

Pro racers Alexander Kristoff (Katusha), Joaquim Rodriguez (Katusha) and Alejandro Valverde (Movistar) ride the Aeroad. Diminutive climbing specialist Nairo Quintana (Movistar) eschews aero for something more lightweight to match his physique — the Ultimate.

Time trial specialists Adriano Malori and Alex Dowsett (Movistar) have both used the Speedmax machine against the clock to devastating effect. Race wins aren't

everything, but the sheer number of victories generated by riders aboard Canyon bikes in the past couple of seasons cannot be ignored.

Although our CF SLX 9.0 test model sits near the top of the Aeroad range, the lowest-priced 6.0 model comes with a mechanical Shimano Ultegra groupset and the same Mavic Cosmic wheelset — but minus the Aerocockpit bar and stem — for £2,699. That's still a race-ready bike that weighs just a shade over 7kg.

Canyon is constantly developing new models and, with feedback from its pro team riders, is helping to push the envelope of bike design. The company looks set to have a long, successful and prosperous future.

**“This is a pro-spec  
bike that is very easy  
to live with”**

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# 2015 major race results

Can't remember who was third in the 2015 Milan-San Remo? Brush up on your pro cycling facts with our comprehensive one-day and stage race results from the men's World Tour season 2015, the women's Elite series and the world road championships

Words Stephen Puddicombe Photos Graham Watson, Yuzuru Sunada

## Tour Down Under January 20-25

Capitalising on the form he'd built up in preparation for his Hour Record attempt, Rohan Dennis won the Tour Down Under, while his teammate Cadel Evans bowed out of the pro peloton with a respectable third overall.

### Overall

**1 Rohan Dennis** (Aus) BMC in 19:51:18; **2 Richie Porte** (Aus) Sky at 0:02; **3 Cadel Evans** (Aus) BMC at 0:20; **4 Tom Dumoulin** (Ned) Giant-Alpecin at 0:22; **5 Rubén Fernández** (Esp) Movistar at 0:24; **6 Domenico Pozzovivo** (Ita) Ag2r La Mondiale at 0:31; **7 Daryl Impey** (RSA) Orica-GreenEdge at 0:35; **8 Gorka Izagirre** (Esp) Movistar at 0:52; **9 Jarlinson Pantano** (Col) IAM Cycling at 0:53; **10 George Bennett** (NZL) Lotto NL-Jumbo at 0:57

### Stages

**Tour Down Under Classic:** **Marcel Kittel** (Ger) Giant-Alpecin  
**1: Jack Bobridge** (Aus) UniSA-Australia; **2: Juan Jose Lobato** (Esp) Movistar; **3: Rohan Dennis** (Aus) BMC; **4: Steele Van Hoff** (Aus) UniSA-Australia; **5: Richie Porte** (Aus) Sky; **6: Wouter Wippert** (Ned) Drapac

### Paris-Nice, March 8-15

Despite crashing on the chaotic penultimate stage under pressure from an ambush from Tony Gallopin, Richie Porte won the overall thanks to victories atop the Col de la Croix de Chaubouret and on

the Col d'Eze time trial.

### Overall

**1 Richie Porte** (Aus) Sky in 29:10:41; **2 Michał Kwiatkowski** (Pol) Etixx-Quick Step at 0:30; **3 Simon Spilak** (Slo) Katusha; **4 Rui Costa** (Por) Lampre-Merida both at same time; **5 Geraint Thomas** (GBr) Sky at 0:41; **6 Tony Gallopin** (Fra) Lotto-Soudal at 1:03; **7 Jakob Fuglsang** (Den) Astana at 1:05; **8 Rafael Valls** (Esp) Lampre-Merida at 1:24; **9 Gorka Izagirre** (Esp) Movistar at 1:38; **10 Tim Wellens** (Bel) Lotto-Soudal at 2:18

### Stages

**Prologue:** Michał Kwiatkowski (Pol) Etixx-Quick Step; **1: Alexander Kristoff** (Nor) Katusha; **2: Andre Greipel** (Ger) Lotto-Soudal; **3: Michael Matthews** (Aus) Orica-GreenEdge; **4: Richie Porte** (Aus) Sky; **5: Davide Cimolai** (Ita) Lampre-Merida; **6: Tony Gallopin** (Fra) Lotto-Soudal; **7: Richie Porte** (Aus) Sky

### Tirreno-Adriatico March 11-17

The anticipated battle of 'the big four' failed to transpire, as Chris Froome pulled out with injury, and Alberto Contador and Vincenzo Nibali unable to deal with the dramatic, race-winning attack made by Nairo Quintana on the snowy Monte Terminillo.

### Overall

**1 Nairo Quintana** (Col) Movistar; **2 Bauke Mollema** (Ned) Trek at 0:18; **3 Rigoberto Uran** (Col) Etixx-Quick Step at 0:31; **4 Thibaut Pinot** (Fra) Cofidis; **5 Niccolò Bonifazio** (Ita) Lampre-Merida; **6 Nacer Bouhanni** (Fra) Cofidis; **7 Fabian Cancellara** (Sui) Trek; **8 Davide Cimolai** (Ita) Lampre-Merida; **9 Tony Gallopin** (Fra) Lotto-Soudal; **10 Edvald Boasson Hagen** (Nor) MTN-Qhubeka all at same time

## Volta a Catalunya March 23-29

An unpredictable beginning saw three different overall leaders in the first four days, before Richie Porte took over and defended his lead to the end. Alejandro Valverde showed great form in winning three of the seven stages, and finished second overall.

### Overall

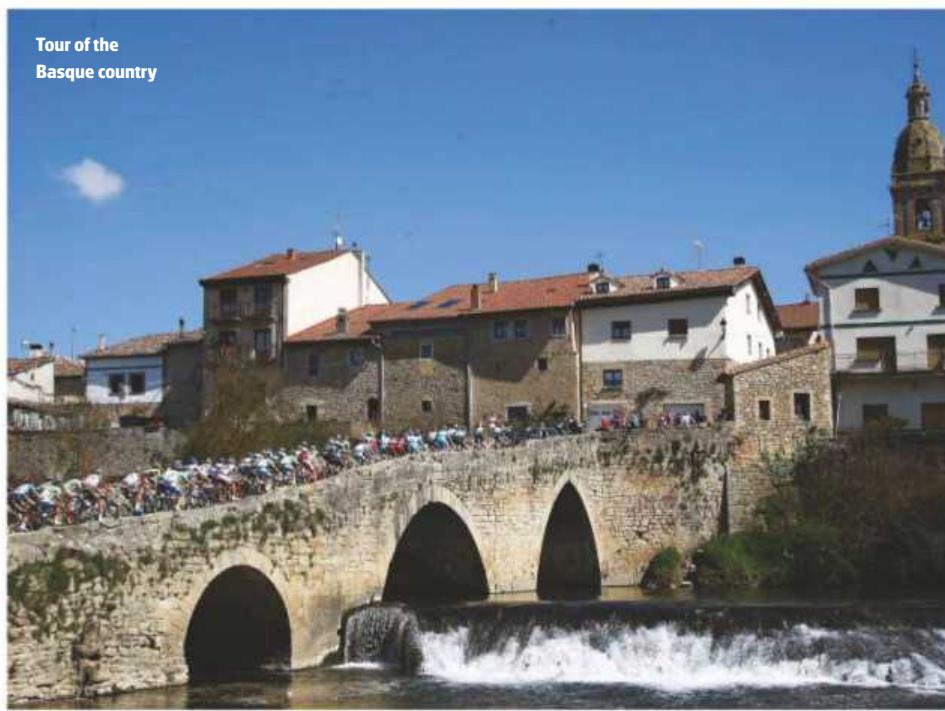
**1 Richie Porte** (Aus) Sky in 30:30:30; **2 Alejandro Valverde** (Esp) Movistar at 0:04; **3 Domenico Pozzovivo** (Ita) Ag2r La Mondiale at 0:05; **4 Alberto Contador** (Spa) Tinkoff-Saxo at 0:07; **5 Rigoberto Uran** (Col) Etixx-Quick Step at 0:18; **6 Fabio Aru** (Ita) Astana at 0:27; **7 Darwin Atapuma** (Col) BMC at 0:33; **8 Rafael Valls** (Esp) Lampre-Merida at 0:43; **9 Wilco Kelderman** (Ned) LottoNL-Jumbo at 1:09; **10 Dan Martin** (Irl) Cannondale-Garmin at 1:35

### Stages

**1: Maciej Paterski** (Pol) CCC- Sprandi-Polkowice; **2: Alejandro Valverde** (Esp) Movistar; **3: Domenico Pozzovivo** (Ita) Ag2r-La Mondiale; **4: Tejay van Garderen** (USA) BMC; **5: Alejandro Valverde** (Esp) Movistar; **6: Sergey Chernetskiy** (Rus) Katusha; **7: Alejandro Valverde** (Esp) Movistar

### E3 Harelbeke, March 27

Geraint Thomas claimed the biggest classic of his career and established himself as one of the major favourites for the Tour of Flanders, distancing his



**Tour of the Basque country**

breakaway companions Zdenek Stybar and Peter Sagan with an unanswerable attack 4km from the finish.

**1 Geraint Thomas** (GBr) Sky in 5-15-00; **2 Zdenek Stybar** (Cze) Etixx-Quick Step at 0-25; **3 Matteo Trentin** (Ita) Etixx-Quick Step at 0-38; **4 Alexander Kristoff** (Nor) Katusha; **5 Sep Vanmarcke** (Bel) LottoNL-Jumbo; **6 Matti Breschel** (Den) Tinkoff-Saxo; **7 Jurgen Roelandts** (Bel) Lotto-Soudal; **8 Jack Bauer** (NZI) Cannondale-Garmin; **9 Jens Keukeleire** (Bel) Orica-GreenEdge; **10 Daniel Oss** (Ita) BMC all at same time

#### **Gent-Wevelgem, March 29**

Stormy conditions made for perhaps the most extraordinary race of the season, with winds strong enough to cause huge gaps and literally blow riders off their bikes. Luca Paolini emerged from the chaos as victor, attacking from a seven-man lead group towards the end.

**1 Luca Paolini** (Ita) Katusha in 6-20-55; **2 Niki Terpstra** (Ned) Etixx-Quick Step at 0-11; **3 Geraint**

**Thomas** (GBr) Sky at same time; **4 Stijn Vandenbergh** (Bel) Etixx-Quick Step at 0-18; **5 Jens Debuscherre** (Bel) Lotto-Soudal at 0-26; **6 Sep Vanmarcke** (Bel) LottoNL-Jumbo at 0-40; **7 Jurgen Roelandts** (Bel) Lotto-Soudal at 1-52; **8 Daniel Oss** (Ita) BMC at 4-15; **9 Alexander Kristoff** (Nor) Katusha at 5-12; **10 Peter Sagan** (Sck) Tinkoff-Saxo at same time

#### **Tour of flanders, April 5**

A smartly timed move saw Alexander Kristoff and Niki Terpstra break clear of the peloton with 30km to go. The pair held off a pursuing Greg Van Avermaet and Peter Sagan, and Kristoff won the sprint for the win.

**1 Alexander Kristoff** (Nor) Katusha in 6-26-38; **2 Niki Terpstra** (Ned) Etixx-Quick Step at same time; **3 Greg Van Avermaet** (Bel) BMC at 0-07; **4 Peter Sagan** (Svk) Tinkoff-Saxo at 0-17; **5 Tiesj Benoot** (Bel) Lotto-Soudal at 0-35; **6 Lars Boom** (Ned) Astana at same time; **7 John Degenkolb** (Ger) Giant-Alpecin at 0-48; **8 Jurgen Roelandts** (Bel) Lotto-Soudal; **9 Zdenek Stybar** (Cze) Etixx-Quick

Step; **10 Martin Elmiger** (Sui) IAM Cycling all at same time

#### **Tour of the Basque Country April 6-11**

Some viciously steep climbs saw the master of viciously steep climbing, Joaquim Rodriguez, claim two stages and the overall - although it was in the final day's time trial (albeit a very hilly one) that he eventually deposed Sergio Henao on the GC.

#### **Overall**

**1 Joaquim Rodriguez** (Esp) Katusha in 21-49-38; **2 Sergio Henao** (Col) Sky at 0-13; **3 Jon Izagirre** (Spa) Movistar at 0-29; **4 Nairo Quintana** (Col) Movistar at 0-38; **5 Simon Yates** (GBr) Orica-GreenEdge at 0-46; **6 Michele Scarponi** (Ita) Astana at 1-06; **7 Rui Costa** (Por) Lampre-Merida at 1-14; **8 Michal Kwiatkowski** (Pol) Etixx-Quick Step at 1-15; **9 Ilnur Zakarin** (Rus) Katusha at 1-25; **10 Thibaut Pinot** (Fra) FDJ at 1-33

#### **Stages**

**1: Michael Matthews** (Aus) Orica-GreenEdge; **2: Fabio Felline** (Ita) Trek; **3: Joaquim Rodriguez** (Esp) Katusha; **4: Joaquim Rodriguez** (Esp) Katusha; **5: Mikel Landa** (Esp) Astana; **6: Tom Dumoulin** (Ned) Giant-Alpecin

(Esp) Katusha; **4: Joaquim Rodriguez** (Esp) Katusha; **5: Mikel Landa** (Esp) Astana; **6: Tom Dumoulin** (Ned) Giant-Alpecin

#### **Paris-Nice, March 8-15**

#### **Paris-Roubaix, April 12**

John Degenkolb landed his second monument of the season, winning the sprint in a 6-man group, as Etixx-Quick Step yet again blew a numerical advantage in the final stages. Meanwhile Bradley Wiggins enjoyed a romantic end to his pro-career.

**1 John Degenkolb** (Ger) Giant-Alpecin in 5-49-51; **2 Zdenek Stybar** (Cze) Etixx-Quick Step; **3 Greg Van Avermaet** (Bel) BMC; **4 Lars Boom** (Ned) Astana; **5 Martin Elmiger** (Sui) IAM Cycling; **6 Jens Keukeleire** (Bel) Orica-GreenEdge all at same time; **7 Yves Lampaert** (Bel) Etixx-Quick Step at 0-07; **8 Luke Rowe** (GBr) Sky at 0-28; **9 Jens Debusschere** (Bel) Lotto-Soudal at 0-29; **10 Alexander Kristoff** (Nor) Katusha at 0-31

#### **Amstel Gold, April 19**

Michal Kwiatkowski won his first race in the rainbow stripes, out-sprinting Alejandro Valverde in a group of 18. Philippe Gilbert had, as ever, detonated the race on the Cauberg, but unlike last year was caught on the run-in to the line.

**1 Michal Kwiatkowski** (Pol) Etixx-Quick Step in 6-31-49; **2 Alejandro Valverde** (Esp) Movistar; **3 Michael Matthews** (Aus) Orica-GreenEdge; **4 Rui Costa** (Por) Lampre-Merida; **5 Greg Van Avermaet** (Bel) BMC; **6 Tony Gallopin** (Fra) Lotto-Soudal; **7 Julian Alaphilippe** (Fra) Etixx-Quick Step; **8 Enrico Gasparotto** (Ita) Astana; **9 Maciej Paterski** (Pol) CCC-Polsat-Polkowice; **10 Philippe Gilbert** (Bel) BMC all at same time

#### **Fleche-Wallonne, April 22**

A typically uneventful 204.2km preceded a typically hectic sprint up the Mur de Huy, won by Alejandro Valverde. He led from the front for almost the whole

climb, and set a pace in the final few hundred metres that nobody could live with.

**1 Alejandro Valverde** (Esp) Movistar in 5-08-22; **2 Julian Alaphilippe** (Fra) Etixx-Quick Step; **3 Michael Albasini** (Sui) Orica-GreenEdge; **4 Joaquim Rodriguez** (Esp) Katusha; **5 Daniel Moreno** (Esp) Katusha all at same time; **6 Alexis Vuillermoz** (Fra) Ag2r La Mondiale; **7 Sergio Henao** (Col) Sky; **8 Jakob Fuglsang** (Den) Astana; **9 Tom-Jelte Slagter** (Ned) Cannondale-Garmin; **10 Wilco Kelderman** (Ned); **LottoNL-Jumbo** all at same time

### Liege-Bastogne-Liege April 26

A relentlessly attacking Astana did their best to animate a rainy Liege-Bastogne-Liege, but the race eventually boiled down to a 13-man sprint won by Alejandro Valverde, who sealed the Ardennes double by outfoxing the Katusha pair of Joaquim Rodriguez and Daniel Moreno

**1 Alejandro Valverde** (Esp) Movistar in 6-14-20; **2 Julian Alaphilippe** (Fra) Etixx-Quick Step; **3 Joaquim Rodriguez** (Esp) Katusha; **4 Rui Costa** (Por) Lampre-Merida; **5 Roman Kreuziger** (Cze) Tinkoff-Saxo; **6 Romain Bardet** (Fra) Ag2r La Mondiale; **7 Sergio Henao** (Col) Sky; **8 Domenico Pozzovivo** (Ita) Ag2r La Mondiale; **9 Jakob Fuglsang** (Den) Astana; **10 Daniel Moreno** (Esp) Katusha all at same time

### Tour de Romandie April 28-May3

Ilnur Zakarin shocked everyone by first successfully attacking Chris Froome and the other favourites on the queen stage to move into the overall lead, and then holding onto in the subsequent final time trial. His teammate Simon Spilak was second, with Chris Froome

completing the podium.

#### Overall

**1 Ilnur Zakarin** (Rus) Katusha in 18-36-30; **2 Simon Spilak** (Slo) Katusha at 0-17; **3 Chris Froome** (GBr) Sky at 0-35; **4 Thibaut Pinot** (Fra) FDJ at 0-49; **5 Rigoberto Uran** (Col) Etixx-Quick Step at 1-20; **6 Simon Yates** (GBr) Orica GreenEdge at 1-21; **7 Rafal Majka** (Pol) Tinkoff-Saxo at 1-24; **8 Nairo Quintana** (Col) Movistar at 1-42; **9 Romain Bardet** (Fra) Ag2r at 1-43; **10 Vincenzo Nibali** (Ita) Astana at 1-54

#### Stages

**1: Team Sky**; **2: Michael Albasini** (Sui) Orica-GreenEdge; **3: Michael Albasini** (Sui) Orica-GreenEdge; **4: Stefan Kung** (Sui) BMC; **5: Thibaut Pinot** (Fra) FDJ; **6: Tony Martin** (Ger) Etixx-Quick Step

#### Giro D'italia, May 9-31

With hostilities opened between the GC favourites early in the first week, the Giro proved to be a restlessly action-packed race from start to finish.

Alberto Contador was the ultimate victor, recovering from injuries sustained in a crash on stage six while in the pink jersey to fend off the two-pronged Astana attack of Fabio Aru and Mikel Landa.

Astana may have comfortably been the strongest team, winning a total of five stages - including back-to-back mountain victories for both Landa and Aru - but their two leaders could not work well enough in tandem to depose Contador.

Elsewhere Orica-GreenEdge impressed by winning two stages and holding the pink jersey in the first week, and Sacha Modolo and Philippe Gilbert both won two stages each.

#### Overall

**1 Alberto Contador** (Esp) Tinkoff-Saxo in 88-22-25; **2 Fabio Aru** (Ita) Astana at 1-53; **3 Mikel Landa** (Esp) Astana at 3-05; **4 Andrey Amador** (CRC) Movistar

at 8-10; **5 Ryder Hesjedal** (Can) Cannondale-Garmin at 9-52;

**6 Leopold Konig** (Cze) Sky at 10-41; **7 Steven Kruijswijk** (Ned) LottoNL-Jumbo at 10-53;

**8 Damiano Caruso** (Ita) BMC at 12-08; **9 Alexandre Geniez** (Fra) FDJ at 15-51; **10 Yuri Trofimov** (Rus) Katusha at 16-14; **Points**

**Classification:** Giacomo Nizzolo (Ita) Trek; **Mountains Classification:** Giovanni Visconti (Ita) Movistar;

**Young Riders Classification:** Fabio Aru (Ita) Astana

#### Stages

**1: Orica-GreenEdge**; **2: Elia Viviani** (Ita) Sky; **3: Michael Matthews** (Aus) Orica-GreenEdge; **4: Davide Formolo** (Ita) Cannondale-Garmin; **5: Jan Polanc** (Pol) Lampre-Merida; **6: Andre Greipel** (Ger) Lotto-Soudal; **7: Diego Ulissi** (Ita) Lampre-Merida; **8: Benat Intxausti** (Esp) Movistar; **9: Paolo Tiralongo** (Ita) Astana; **10: Nicola Boem** (Ita) Bardiani-CSF; **11: Ilnur Zakarin** (Rus) Katusha; **12: Philippe Gilbert** (Bel) BMC; **13: Sacha Modolo** (Ita) Lampre-Merida; **14: Vasil Kiryienka** (Blr) Sky; **15: Mikel Landa** (Esp) Astana; **16: Mikel Landa** (Esp) Astana; **17: Sacha Modolo** (Ita) Lampre-Merida; **18: Philippe Gilbert** (Bel) BMC; **19: Fabio Aru** (Ita) Astana; **20: Fabio Aru** (Ita) Astana; **21: Iljo Keisse** (Bel) Etixx-Quick Step

#### Criterium du Dauphine

**June 7-14**

A tight battle between Chris Froome and Tejay van Garderen characterised the GC race, with the Briton edging ahead on the final stage by just 10 seconds.

Nacer Bouhanni won two sprints, and Vincenzo Nibali and Romain Bardet thrilled with exciting attacks.

#### Overall

**1 Chris Froome** (GBr) Sky in 30-59-02; **2 Tejay van Garderen** (USA) BMC at 0-10; **3 Rui Costa** (Por) Lampre-Merida at 1-16; **4 Benat Intxausti** (Esp) Movistar at 1-21; **5 Simon Yates** (GBr) Orica-GreenEdge at 1-33; **6**

**Romain Bardet** (Fra) Ag2r at 2-05;

**7 Dan Martin** (Irl) Cannondale-Garmin at 2-52; **8 Joaquim Rodriguez** (Esp) Katusha at 3-06;

**9 Alejandro Valverde** (Esp) Movistar at 3-12; **10 Andrew Talansky** (USA) Cannondale-Garmin at 4-17

#### Stages

**1: Peter Kennaugh** (GBr) Sky; **2: Nacer Bouhanni** (Fra) Cofidis; **3: BMC**; **4: Nacer Bouhanni** (Fra) Cofidis; **5: Romain Bardet** (Fra) Ag2r; **6: Rui Costa** (Por) Lampre-Merida; **7: Chris Froome** (GBr) Sky; **8: Chris Froome** (GBr) Sky

#### Tour de Suisse, June 13-21

Geraint Thomas offered a sneak preview of what was to come at the Tour by climbing at the front, but just missed out on overall victory to Simon Spilak in a tense final time trial. Tom Dumoulin was third, winning both time trials.

#### Overall

**1 Simon Spilak** (Slo) Katusha in 30-15-09; **2 Geraint Thomas** (GBr) Sky at 0-05; **3 Tom Dumoulin** (Ned) Giant-Alpecin at 0-19; **4 Thibaut Pinot** (Fra) FDJ at 0-45; **5 Domenico Pozzovivo** (Ita) Ag2r at 2-21; **6 Bob Jungels** (Lux) Trek at 2-58; **7 Miguel**



**Angel Lopez** (Col) Astana at 3-06; **8**  
**Steve Morabito** (Sui) FDJ at 3-17; **9**  
**Robert Gesink** (Ned) LottoNL-Jumbo at 3-19; **10** **Rafal Majka** (Pol) Tinkoff-Saxo at 3-20

### Stages

**1: Tom Dumoulin** (Ned) Giant-Alpecin; **2: Kristijan Durasek** (Cro) Lampre-Merida; **3: Peter Sagan** (Svk) Tinkoff-Saxo; **4: Michael Matthews** (Aus) Orica-GreenEdge; **5: Thibaut Pinot** (Fra) FDJ; **6: Peter Sagan** (Svk) Tinkoff-Saxo; **7: Alexander Kristoff** (Nor) Katusha; **8: Alexey Lutsenko** (Kaz) Astana; **9: Tom Dumoulin** (Ned) Giant-Alpecin

### Tour de France, July 4-26

Chris Froome obliterated the opposition with one fatal attack on La Pierre-Saint Martin (stage 10's finishing climb), putting minutes into all of his major rivals.

From that moment on victory didn't look in much doubt, with Alberto Contador clearly tired from the Giro and Vincenzo Nibali losing too much time in the first week - until Nairo Quintana made a bid for glory on Alpe d'Huez on the race's penultimate day.

Ultimately he came around a minute short, but did ensure a

second place finish, while teammate Alejandro Valverde sealed third.

There weren't many opportunities for sprinters, but Andre Greipel still racked up four wins, including on the Champs Elysees, while Peter Sagan won a fourth consecutive green jersey.

### Overall

**1 Chris Froome** (GBr) Sky in 84-46-14; **2 Nairo Quintana** (Col) Movistar at 1-12; **3 Alejandro Valverde** (Esp) Movistar at 5-25; **4 Vincenzo Nibali** (Ita) Astana at 8-36; **5 Alberto Contador** (Esp) Tinkoff-Saxo at 9-48; **6 Robert Gesink** (Ned) LottoNL-Jumbo at 10-47; **7 Bauke Mollema** (Ned) Trek at 15-14; **8 Mathias Frank** (Sui) IAM Cycling at 15-39; **9 Romain Bardet** (Fra) Ag2r La Mondiale at 16-00; **10 Pierre Rolland** (Fra) Europcar at 17-30; **Points** Classification: Peter Sagan; **Mountain Classification**: Chris Froome; **Young Riders Classification**: Nairo Quintana

### Stages

**1: Rohan Dennis** (Aus) BMC; **2: Andre Greipel** (Ger) Lotto-Soudal; **3: Joaquin Rodriguez** (Esp) Katusha; **4: Tony Martin** (Ger)



Etixx-Quick Step; **5: Andre Greipel** (Ger) Lotto-Soudal; **6: Zdenek Stybar** (Cze) Etixx-Quick Step;

**7: Mark Cavendish** (GBr) Etixx-Quick Step; **8: Alexis Vuillermoz** (Fra) Ag2r; **9: BMC**; **10: Chris Froome** (GBr) Sky; **11: Rafal Majka** (Pol) Tinkoff-Saxo; **12: Joaquin Rodriguez** (Esp) Katusha; **13: Greg Van Avermaet** (Bel) BMC; **14: Steve Cummings** (GBr) MTN-Qhubeka; **15: Andre Greipel** (Ger) Lotto-Soudal; **16: Ruben Plaza** (Esp) Lampre-Merida; **17: Simon Geschke** (Ger) Giant-Alpecin; **18: Romain Bardet** (Fra) Ag2r; **19: Vincenzo Nibali** (Ita) Astana; **20: Thibaut Pinot** (Fra) FDJ; **21: Andre Greipel** (Ger) Lotto-Soudal

### San Sebastian, August 1

Adam Yates landed his first with an attack on the final climb that no other rider in the lead group could follow. On route to victory he passed Greg Van Avermaet, who had led the race before being upended by a race motorbike.

### Stages

**1 Adam Yates** (GBr) Orica-GreenEdge in 26-31-59; **2 Philippe Gilbert** (Bel) BMC at 0-59; **3 Wilco Kelderman** (Ned) LottoNL-Jumbo at 1-17; **4 Philippe Gilbert** (Bel) BMC at 1-40; **5 Fabio Felline** (Ita) Trek at 1-48; **6 Andriy Grivko** (Ukr) Astana at 1-54; **7 Michael Rodgers** (Aus) Tinkoff-Saxo at 2-02; **8 Tiesj Benoot** (Bel) Lotto-Soudal at 2-11; **9 Chris Juul-Jensen** (Den) Tinkoff-Saxo; **10 Julian Alaphilippe** (Fra) Etixx-Quick Step both at same time

### Tour de Poland August 2-8

A tight race was decided on the final day's time trial, where Jon Izagirre edged out stage five Bart De Clercq by just two seconds. Marcel Kittel made a short-lived comeback with the opening win, and Matteo Pelucchi won two sprints.

### Overall

**1 Jon Izagirre** (Esp) Movistar in 26-04-38; **2 Bart De Clercq** (Bel) Lotto-Soudal at 0-02; **3 Ben**

**Hermans** (Bel) BMC at 0-03; **4 Ilnur Zakarin** (Rus) Katusha at 0-14; **5 Fabio Aru** (Ita) Astana at 0-15; **6 Diego Ulissi** (Ita) Lampre-Merida at 0-19; **7 Christophe Riblon** (Fra) Ag2r La Mondiale at 0-40; **8 Sergio Henao** (Col) Sky at 0-54; **9 Davide Formolo** (Ita) Cannondale-Garmin at 1-23; **10 Mikel Nieve** (Esp) Sky at 1-32

### Stages

**1: Marcel Kittel** (Ger) Giant-Alpecin; **2: Matteo Pelucchi** (Ita) IAM Cycling; **3: Matteo Pelucchi** (Ita) IAM Cycling; **4: Maciej Bodnar** (Pol) Tinkoff-Saxo; **5: Bart De Clercq** (Bel) Lotto-Soudal; **6: Sergio Henao** (Col) Sky; **7: Marcin Bialoblocki** (Pol) Polish National Team

### Eneco Tour August 10-16

After the lead had switched hands on all but one day, Tim Wellens won the overall in pretty much exactly the same way he did last year, attacking solo on the penultimate stage to gain an unassailable lead of over a minute.

### Overall

**1 Tim Wellens** (Bel) Lotto-Soudal in 26-31-59; **2 Greg Van Avermaet** (Bel) BMC at 0-59; **3 Wilco Kelderman** (Ned) LottoNL-Jumbo at 1-17; **4 Philippe Gilbert** (Bel) BMC at 1-40; **5 Fabio Felline** (Ita) Trek at 1-48; **6 Andriy Grivko** (Ukr) Astana at 1-54; **7 Michael Rodgers** (Aus) Tinkoff-Saxo at 2-02; **8 Tiesj Benoot** (Bel) Lotto-Soudal at 2-11; **9 Chris Juul-Jensen** (Den) Tinkoff-Saxo; **10 Julian Alaphilippe** (Fra) Etixx-Quick Step both at same time

### Stages

**1: Elia Viviani** (Ita) Sky; **2: Andre Greipel** (Ger) Lotto-Soudal; **3: Tom Boonen** (Bel) Etixx-Quick Step; **4: Jos van Emden** (Ned) LottoNL-Jumbo; **5: Johan Le Bon** (Fra) FDJ; **6: Tim Wellens** (Bel) Lotto-Soudal; **7: Manuel Quinziato** (Ita) BMC

### Vuelta a Espana

#### August 22-September 13

Uphill finishes in the first week forced the pre-race favourites to come to the fore, although

they were happy to let Esteban Chaves and Tom Dumoulin to fight it for the red jersey ownership.

Few expected either of the pair to still be at the top of GC come Madrid, but that's exactly where Dumoulin found himself on the penultimate stage.

However, a perfectly executed team manoeuvre from Astana on that stage isolated the big Dutchman, causing him to fall to sixth overall and earning overall victory instead for Fabio Aru ahead of Joaquim Rodriguez and Rafal Majka.

In a race marred by controversies earlier on, Vincenzo Nibali was disqualified for holding on to a car, and Peter Sagan abandoned after being hit by a race motorbike.

### Overall

**1 Fabio Aru** (Ita) Astana in 85-36-13; **2 Joaquim Rodriguez** (Esp) Katusha at 0-57; **3 Rafal Majka** (Pol) Tinkoff-Saxo at 1-09; **4 Nairo Quintana** (Col) Movistar at 1-42; **5 Esteban Chaves** (Col) Orica-GreenEdge at 3-10; **6 Tom Dumoulin** (Ned) Giant-Alpecin at 3-46; **7 Alejandro Valverde** (Esp) Movistar at 6-47; **8 Mikel Nieve** (Esp) Sky at 7-06; **9 Daniel Moreno** (Esp) Katusha at 7-12; **10 Louis Meintjes** (RSA) MTN-Qhubeka at 10-26; **Points Classification:** **Alejandro Valverde** (Esp) Movistar; **Mountains Classification:** **Omar Fraile** (Esp) Caja Rural-Seguros RGA; **Combination Classification:** **Joaquim Rodriguez** (Esp) Katusha

### Stages

**1: BMC**; **2: Esteban Chaves** (Col) Orica-GreenEdge; **3: Peter Sagan** (Svk) Tinkoff-Saxo; **4: Alejandro Valverde** (Esp) Movistar; **5: Caleb Ewan** (Aus) Orica-GreenEdge; **6: Esteban Chaves** (Col) Orica-GreenEdge; **7: Bert-Jan Lindeman** (Ned) LottoNL-Jumbo; **8: Jasper Stuyven** (Bel) Trek; **9: Tom Dumoulin** (Ned)



The World's in Richmond, USA

Giant-Alpecin; **10: Kristian Sbaragli** (Ita) MTN-Qhubeka; **11: Mikel Landa** (Esp) Astana; **12: Danny Van Poppel** (Ned) Trek; **13: Nelson Oliveira** (Por) Lampre-Merida; **14: Alessandro De Marchi** (Ita) BMC; **15: Joaquim Rodriguez** (Esp) Katusha; **16: Frank Schleck** (Lux) Trek; **17: Tom Dumoulin** (Ned) Giant-Alpecin; **18: Nicolas Roche** (Irl) Sky; **19: Alexis Gougeard** (Fra) Ag2r; **20: Ruben Plaza** (Esp) Lampre-Merida; **21: John Degenkolb** (Ger) Giant-Alpecin

### Vattenfall Cyclassics August 23

Andre Greipel beat Alexander Kristoff and Giacomo Nizzolo in a mass sprint, to win his first ever World Tour one-day race. Mark Cavendish was denied the opportunity to challenge him in the sprint, after he was held up in a late crash.

**1 Andre Greipel** (Ger) Lotto-Soudal in 4-57-05; **2 Alexander Kristoff** (Nor) Katusha; **3 Giacomo Nizzolo** (Ita) Trek; **4 Tom Boonen** (Bel) Etixx-Quick Step; **5 Greg Van Avermaet** (Bel) BMC; **6 Arnaud Demare** (Fra) FDJ; **7 Matti Breschel** (Den) Tinkoff-Saxo; **8 Ramon Sinkeldam** (Ned) Giant-Alpecin; **9 Niccolò Bonifazio** (Ita) Lampre-Merida; **10 Rasmus Guldhammer** (Den) Cult Energy all at same time

### GP Ouest-France August 30

Alexander Kristoff claimed his 20th win of the season, with a dominant sprint in a bunch finish. Having hauled himself

over the final climb, victory seemed inevitable as he was led out on the finishing straight with other top sprinters missing.

**1 Alexander Kristoff** (Nor) Katusha in 5-31-32; **2 Simone Ponzi** (Ita) Southeast; **3 Ramunas Navardauskas** (Lit) Cannondale-Garmin; **4 Grega Bole** (Slo) CCC-Sprandi-Polko-wice; **5 Jurgen Roelandts** (Bel) Lotto-Soudal; **6 Anthony Roux** (Fra) FDJ; **7 Armando Fonseca** (Fra) Bretagne-Seche Environnement; **8 Wout Poels** (Ned) Sky; **9 Rasmus Guldhammer** (Den) Cult Energy; **10 Magnus Cort** (Den) Orica-GreenEdge all at same time

### GP de Quebec, September 11

The last in a flurry of attacks from Etixx-Quick Step, Rigoberto Uran's bold move in the final kilometre was enough to win the GP de Quebec, despite BMC's best efforts to reel him in. Michael Matthews beat Alexander Kristoff in the sprint for second.

**1 Rigoberto Uran** (Col) Etixx-Quick Step in 5-09-47; **2 Michael Matthews** (Aus) Orica-GreenEdge; **3 Alexander Kristoff** (Nor) Katusha; **4 Tom-Jelte Slagter** (Ned) Cannondale-Garmin; **5 Diego Ulissi** (Ita) Lampre-Merida; **6 Bauke Mollema** (Ned) Trek; **7 Philippe Gilbert** (Bel) BMC; **8 Tony Gallopin** (Fra) Lotto-Soudal; **9 Warren Barguil** (Fra) Giant-Alpecin; **10 Greg Van Avermaet** (Bel) BMC all at same time

### GP de Montreal September 11

Amidst horrible conditions of torrential rain, Tim Wellens outsprinted Adam Yates to win the GP de Montreal. The pair had got away together on the final ascent of Mount Royal, and just held off a chasing pack led by Rui Costa.

**1 Tim Wellens** (Bel) Lotto-Soudal in 5-20-09; **2 Adam Yates** (GBr) Orica-GreenEdge at same time; **3 Rui Costa** (Por) Lampre-Merida at 0-02; **4 Jan Bakelants** (Bel) Ag2r La Mondiale at 0-04; **5 Tiesj Benoot** (Bel) Lotto-Soudal at same time; **6 Wilco Kelderman** (Ned) LottoNL-Jumbo at 0-05; **7 Romain Bardet** (Fra) Ag2r La Mondiale at same time; **8 Robert Gesink** (Ned) LottoNL-Jumbo at 0-09; **9 Philippe Gilbert** (Bel) BMC; **10 Tom-Jelte Slagter** (Ned) Cannondale-Garmin both at same time

### Eneco Tour August 10-16

#### Team Time Trial World Championships, September 20

BMC retained their title, beating Etixx-Quick Step's erstwhile quickest time by eleven seconds. The Belgian team had to settle for second and Movistar claimed bronze ahead of Orica-GreenEdge, while Tinkoff-Saxo's hopes were scuppered by a crash.

**1 BMC** in 42-07; **2 Etixx-Quick Step** at 0-11; **3 Movistar** at 0-31; **4 Orica-GreenEdge** at 0-54; **5 Giant-Alpecin** at 1-04; **6 LottoNL-Jumbo** at 1-18; **7 Lotto-Soudal** at 1-27; **8 Astana** at 1-38; **9 Sky** at 1-42; **10 Trek** at 1-47

### Individual Time Trial World Championships September 30

A time-trial full of surprises saw Vasil Kiryienka earn Belarus its first ever gold medal ahead of Adriano Malori and Jerome Coppel, while pre-race favourites Tony Martin, Rohan Dennis and Tom Dumoulin languished over a minute adrift in seventh, sixth and fifth.

**1 Vasil Kiryienka** (Blr) in 1-02-29;  
**2 Adriano Malori** (Ita) at 0-09;  
**3 Jerome Coppel** (Fra) at 0-26;  
**4 Jonathan Castroviejo** (Esp) at

0-29; **5 Tom Dumoulin** (Ned) at 1-01; **6 Rohan Dennis** (Aus) at 1-07; **7 Tony Martin** (Ger) at 1-16; **8 Maciej Bodnar** (Pol) at 1-17; **9 Marcin Bialoblocki** (Pol) at 1-22; **10 Moreno Moser** (Ita) at 1-31

### Individual Road Race World Championships September 27

Peter Sagan finally pulled off the huge one-day win he'd long promised, with a perfectly timed-attack on the penultimate climb of the Richmond course. No-one could live with his pace, and Michael Matthews won the sprint for second ahead of

Ramunas Navardauskas.

**1 Peter Sagan** (Svk) in 6-14-37;  
**2 Michael Matthews** (Aus) at 0-03;  
**3 Ramunas Navardauskas** (Lit);  
**4 Alexander Kristoff** (Nor);  
**5 Alejandro Valverde** (Esp);  
**6 Simon Gerrans** (Aus); **7 Tony Gallopin** (Fra); **8 Michal Kwiatkowski** (Pol); **9 Rui Costa** (Por); **10 Philippe Gilbert** (Bel) all at same time

### Tour of Lombardy October 4

A thrilling downhill attack in the finale earned Vincenzo Nibali a long-awaited first monument.

He was pushed hard by Danni Moreno, who had earlier closed down every attack, but opened up enough of a gap to hold on.

**1 Vincenzo Nibali** (Ita) Astana in 6-16-28; **2 Daniel Moreno** (Esp) Katusha at 0-21; **3 Thibaut Pinot** (Fra) FDJ at 0-32; **4 Alejandro Valverde** (Esp) Movistar at 0-46; **5 Diego Rosa** (Ita) Astana at; **6 Mikel Nieve** (Spa) Sky both at same time; **7 Tony Gallopin** (Fra) Lotto-Soudal at 0-56; **8 Esteban Chaves** (Col) Orica-GreenEdge; **9 Sergio Henao** (Col) Sky both at same time; **10 Gianluca Brambilla** (Ita) Etixx-Quick Step at 1-10

## Women's World Cup 2015

The undeniable star of women's cycling in 2015 was Lizzie Armitstead. For several years now she has been recognised as one of the leading riders in the world, but this season she raised her game and earned the high-calibre results to become (in the absence of Marianne Vos, who virtually missed the entire season through injury) the best rider in the peloton.

Not only did she again win the season-long World Cup competition - winning the

Trofeo Alfredo Binda, Philadelphia Classic and GP de Plouay along the way - but she also landed the biggest annual prize of them all - the World Championships.

Her closest rival in both the World Cup and World Championships, Anna van der Breggen, may have been disappointed to finish runner-up in both those events, but did nonetheless enjoy plenty of success elsewhere. She deposed Megan Guarnier on the final day of the biggest stage race on the calendar, the Giro Rosa, to win the overall,

and also pulled off an unlikely solo attack to win arguably the highest profile race on the calendar, La Course by Le Tour de France.

That race was all the more of a spectacle for her bold attack, and is one of several other still very young races that have appeared over the last couple of years. The likes of The Women's Tour and La Madrid Challenge by La Vuelta all produced exciting, televised racing, and will help bolster the calendar when it is restructured next year as a new Women's WorldTour.



Flanders winner  
Elisa Longo Borghini

### Tour of Qatar, February 3-6

#### Overall

**1 Lizzie Armitstead** (GBr) Boels-Dolmans in 9-59-25; **2 Chloe Hosking** (Aus) Wiggle-Honda at 0-12; **3 Ellen van Dijk** (Ned) Boels-Dolmans at 0-22; **4 Trixi Worrack** (Ger) Velocio-SRAM at 0-29; **5 Emma Johansson** (Swe) Orica-AIS at 0-30; **6 Jolien D'Hoore** (Bel) Wiggle-Honda at 2-26; **7 Tiffany Cromwell** (Aus) Velocio-SRAM at 2-29; **8 Pascale Jeuland** (Fra) France National Team; **9 Amy Pieters** (Ned) Liv-Plantur both at same time; **10 Gracie Elvin** (Aus) Orica-AIS at 2-37

#### Stages

**1: Annalisa Cucinotta** (Ita) Ale Cipollini; **2: Ellen van Dijk** (Ned)

Boels-Dolmans; **3: Lizzie Armitstead** (GBr) Boels-Dolmans; **4: Lizzie Armitstead** (GBr) Boels-Dolmans

### Ronde van Drenthe March 14

**1 Jolien D'Hoore** (Bel) Wiggle-Honda in 3-33-34; **2 Amy Pieters** (Ned) Liv-Plantur; **3 Ellen van Dijk** (Ned) Boels-Dolmans; **4 Lucinda Brand** (Ned) Rabo-Liv; **5 Chloe Hosking** (Aus) Wiggle-Honda all at same time

### Trofeo Alfredo Binda Commune di Cittiglio March 29

**1 Lizzie Armitstead** (GBr) Boels-Dolmans in 3-08-13; **2 Pauline Ferrand-Prevot** (Fra) Rabo-Liv; **3 Anna van der Breggen** (Ned) Rabo-Liv; **4 Elisa Longo Borghini** (Ita) Wiggle-Honda; **5 Alena Amialiusik** (Blr)

Velocio-SRAM all at same time

### Tour de Flanders, April 5

**1 Elisa Longo Borghini** (Ita) Wiggle-Honda in 3-50-43; **2 Jolien D'Hoore** (Ned) Wiggle-Honda at 0-43; **3 Anna van der Breggen** (Ned) Rabo-Liv; **4 Annemiek van Vleuten** (Ned) Bigla; **5 Elena Cecchini** (Ita) Lotto-Soudal all at same time

### Fleche Wallonne, April 22

**1 Anna van der Breggen** (Ned) Rabo-Liv in 3-18-46; **2 Annemiek van Vleuten** (Ned) Bigla at 0-12; **3 Megan Guarnier** (USA) Boels-Dolmans at 0-20; **4 Ashleigh Moolman** (RSA) Bigla at 0-32; **5 Katarzyna Niewiadoma** (Pol) Rabo-Liv at 0-40;

### Festival Luxembourgeois du cyclism Feminin Eisy

# CS

## Review of the year

Jacobs, May 1-3

### Overall

**1 Anna van der Breggen** (Ned) Rabo-Liv in 5-21-29; **2 Annemiek van Vleuten** (Ned) Bigla at 0-02; **3 Lucinda Brand** (Ned) Rabo-Liv at 0-03; **4 Katrin Garfoot** (Aus) Orica-AIS at 0-08; **5 Pauline Ferrand-Prevot** (Fra) Rabo-Liv at 0-12; **6 Christine Majerus** (Lux) Boels-Dolmans at 0-13; **7 Ashleigh Moolman-Pasio** (Aus) at same time; **8 Lizzie Williams** (Aus) Orica-AIS at 0-17; **9 Floortje Mackaij** (Ned) Liv-Plantur at 0-18; **10 Amy Pieters** (Ned) Liv-Plantur at same time

### Stages

**1: Anna van der Breggen** (Ned) Rabo-Liv; **2: Elena Cecchini** (Ita) Lotto-Soudal; **3: Floortje Mackaij** (Ned) Liv-Plantur; **4: Anna van der Breggen** (Ned) Rabo-Liv

### Tour of California, May 8-10

### Overall

**1 Trixi Worrack** (Ger) Velocio-SRAM in 6-24-16; **2 Leah Kirchmann** (Can) Optum-KBS at 0-05; **3 Lauren Komanski** (USA) Twenty16 p/b Sho-Air at 0-06; **4 Katie Hall** (USA) UnitedHealthCare at 0-16; **5 Alena Amialiusk** (Blr) Velocio-SRAM at 0-26; **6**

Armitstead wins stage 3 of the Tour of Qatar

**Flavia Oliveira** (Bra) Ale-Cipollini-Galassia at 0-35; **7 Alison Jackson** (Can) Twenty16 p/b Sho-Air at 0-41; **8 Lauren Stephens** (USA) TIBCO-SVB at 0-42; **9 Lex Albrecht** (Can) Optum-KBS at 0-54; **10 Andrea Dvorak** (USA) Twenty16 p/b Sho-Air at 1-03

### Stages

**1: Katie Hall** (USA) UnitedHealthCare; **2: Leah Kirchmann** (Can) Optum-KBS; **3: Leah Kirchmann** (Can) Optum-KBS

### Tour of Chongming Island May 8-10

### Overall

**1 Kirsten Wild** (Ned) Hitec Products in 7-46-20; **2 Roxane Fournier** (Fra) Poitou-Charentes. Futuroscope.86 at 0-08; **3**

**Annalisa Cucinotta** (Ita) Ale-Cipollini-Galassia at 0-12; **4**

**Giorgia Bronzini** (Ita) Wiggle-Honda at 0-15; **5 Shelley Olds** (USA) Bigla at 0-16; **6 Pascale Jeuland** (Fra) Poitou-Charentes. Futuroscope.86 at 0-20; **7 Iris**

**Sachet** (Fra) France National Team at 0-21; **8 Tin Ying Huan** (TAI) Thailand at 0-22; **9 Elise Delzenne** (Fra) France National Team at 0-24; **10 Zhao Juan Meng** (HKG) China Chongming-Liv-Champion System at same time

### Stages

**1: Kirsten Wild** (Ned) Hitec

Products ; **2: Kirsten Wild** (Ned) Hitec Products ; **3 Roxane Fournier** (Fra) Poitou-Charentes. Futuroscope.86

### Tour of Chongming Island World Cup, May 17

**1 Giorgia Bronzini** (Ita) Wiggle-Honda in 3-09-45; **2 Kirsten Wild** (Ned) Hitec Products; **3 Fanny Riberot** (Fra) France National Team; **4 Shelley Olds** (USA) Bigla; **5 Lotta Lepisto** (Bigla) all at same time

### Tour of Zhoushan Island May 20-25

### Overall

**1 Lauren Kitchen** (Aus) Hitec Products in 7-30-46; **2 Elena Kuchinskaya** (Rus) Servetto-Footon at 0-29; **3 Charlotte Becker** (Ger) Hitec Products at 3-18; **4 Tatiana Guderzo** (Ita) Hitec Products at 3-19; **5 Michela Pavin** (Ita) Servetto-Footon at 3-20; **6 Anastasia Chulkova** (Rus) BePink-La Classica at 3-21; **7 Ilaria Sanguineti** (Ita) BePink-La Classica at 3-23; **8 Qian Yu Yang** (HKG) Hong Kong National Team at 3-25; **9 Oxana Kozonchuk** (Rus) Russian National Team at 3-28; **10 Wantong Wang** (Chi) China Chongming-Liv-Champion System at 3-29

### Stages

**1: Tatiana Guderzo** (Ita) Hitec

Products; **2: Lauren Kitchen** (Aus) Hitec Products; **3: Anastasia Chulkova** (Rus) BePink-La Classica; **4: Lauren Kitchen** (Aus) Hitec Products

### Philadelphia Cycling Classic, June 7

**1 Lizzie Armitstead** (GBr); Boels-Dolmans in 2-58-01; **2 Elisa Longo Borghini** (Ita) Wiggle-Honda ; **3 Alena Amialiusik** (Blr) Velocio-SRAM; **4 Shelley Olds** (USA) Bigla all at same time; **5 Coryn Rivera** (USA) UnitedHealthCare at 0-03

### Emakumeen Euskal Bira June 10-14

### Overall

**1 Katarzyna Niewiadoma** (Pol) Rabo-Liv in 10-44-24; **2 Ashleigh Moolman-Pasio** (RSA) Bigla at 0-01; **3 Emma Johansson** (Swe) Orica-AIS at 0-02; **4 Megan Guarner** (USA) Boels-Dolmans at 0-08; **5 Katrin Garfoot** (Aus) Orica-AIS at 0-40; **6 Tetyana Riabchenko** (Ukr) Sottoli-Giusfredi at 1-31; **7 Annemiek van Vleuten** (Ned) Bigla at 1-44; **8 Anna van der Breggen** (Ned) Rabo-Liv at 1-59; **9 Amanda Spratt** (Aus) Orica-AIS at 2-09; **10 Evelyn Stevens** (USA) Boels-Dolmans at 2-11

### Stages

**Prologue:** Annemiek van Vleuten (Ned) Bigla; **1: Megan Guarner** (USA) Boels-Dolmans; **2: Emma Johansson** (Swe) Orica-AIS; **3: Chantal Blaak** (Ned) Rabo-Liv; **4: Emma Johansson** (Swe) Orica-AIS

### The Women's Tour June 17-21

### Overall

**1 Lisa Brennauer** (Ger) Velocio-SRAM in 15-03-24; **2 Jolien D'Hoore** (Bel) Wiggle-Honda at 0-06; **3 Christine Majerus** (Lux) Boels-Dolmans at 0-07; **4 Emma Johansson** (Swe) Orica-AIS at 0-13; **5 Hannah Barnes** (GBr) UnitedHealthCare at 0-14; **6 Simona Frappi** (Ita) Ale-Cipollini-Galassia at 0-26; **7**



**Leah Kirchmann** (Can) Optum-KBS at 0-29; **8 Alexis Ryan** (USA) UnitedHealthCare at 0-30; **9 Pascale Jeuland** (Fra) Poitou-Charentes.Futuroscope.86; **10 Maria Giulia Confalonieri** (Ita) Ale-Cipollini-Galassia both at same time

### Stages

**1: Lizzie Armitstead** (GBr) Boels-Dolmans; **2: Jolien D'Hoore** (Bel) Wiggle-Honda; **3: Christine Majerus** (Lux) Boels-Dolmans; **4: Lisa Brennauer** (Ger) Velocio-SRAM; **5: Hannah Barnes** (GBr) UnitedHealthCare

### Giro d'Italia, July 3-12

#### Overall

**1 Anna van der Breggen** (Ned) Rabo-Liv in 24-15-08; **2 Mara Abbott** (USA) Wiggle-Honda at 1-20; **3 Megan Guarnier** (USA) Boels-Dolmans at 1-43; **4 Ashleigh Moolman** (RSA) Bigla at 2-12; **5 Katarzyna Niewiadoma** (Pol) Rabo-Liv at 3-11; **6 Pauline Ferrand-Prevot** (Fra) Rabo-Liv at 6-57; **7 Flavia Oliveira** (Bra) Ale-Cipollini-Galassia at 7-35; **8 Elisa Longo Borghini** (Ita) Wiggle-Honda at 8-17; **9 Evelyn Stevens** (USA) Boels-Dolmans at 9-08; **10 Shara Gillow** (Aus) Rabo-Liv at 10-07

### Stages

**Prologue:** Annemiek van Vleuten (Ned) Bigla; **1: Barbara Guarisch** (Ita) Velocio-SRAM; **2: Megan Guarnier** (USA) Boels-Dolmans; **3: Lucinda Brand** (Ned) Rabo-Liv; **4: Annalisa Cucinotta** (Ita) Ale-Cipollini-Galassia; **5: Pauline Ferrand-Prevot** (Fra) Rabo-Liv; **6: Mayuko Hagiwara** (Jap) Wiggle-Honda; **7: Lucinda Brand** (Ned) Rabo-Liv; **8: Anna van der Breggen** (Ned) Rabo-Liv; **9: Mara Abbott** (USA) Wiggle-Honda

### International Thuringen Rundfahrt der Frauen, July 17-23

#### Overall

**1 Emma Johansson** (Swe)

Orica-AIS in 19-46-01; **2 Karol-Ann Canuel** (Can) Velocio-SRAM at 0-10; **3 Lauren Stephens** (USA) TIBCO-SVB at 0-18; **4 Amanda Spratt** (Aus) Orica-AIS at 0-26; **5 Lisa Brennauer** (Ger) Velocio-SRAM at 1-04; **6 Joelle Numainville** (Can) Bigla at 2-41; **7 Lotta Lepisto** (Fin) Bigla at 3-02; **8 Martina Ritter** (Aut) Bigla at 3-10; **9 Amy Pieters** (Ned) Dutch National Team at 3-13; **10 Eugenia Bujak** (Pol) Bigla at 3-26

### Stages

**1: Lisa Brennauer** (Ger) Velocio-SRAM; **2: Eugenia Bujak** (Pol) Bigla; **3a: Lisa Brennauer** (Ger) Velocio-SRAM; **3b: Gracie Elvin** (Aus) Orica-AIS; **4: Lotta Lepisto** (Fin) Bigla; **5: Coryn Rivera** (USA) UnitedHealthcare

**6: Katherine Hall** (USA) United-Healthcare; **7: Karol-Ann Canuel** (Can) Velocio-SRAM

### La Corse by Tour de France, July 26

**1 Anna van der Breggen** (Ned) Rabo-Liv in 2-00-41; **2 Jolien D'Hoore** (Bel) Wiggle-Honda at 0-01; **3 Amy Pieters** (Ned) Liv-Plantur; **4 Lizzie Armitstead** (GBr) Boels-Dolmans; **5 Lotta Lepisto** (Fin) Bigla all at same time

### Sparkassen Giro, August 2

**1 Barbara Guarisch** (Ita) Velocio-SRAM in 3-04-19; **2 Lucinda Brand** (Ned) Rabo-Liv; **3 Emilie Moberg** (Nor) Hitec Products; **4 Lotta Lepisto** (Fin) Bigla; **5 Elena Cecchini** (Ita) Lotto-Soudal all at same time

### La Route de France August 8-16

#### Overall

**1 Elisa Longo Borghini** (Ita) Wiggle-Honda in 17-16-47; **2 Amber Neben** (USA) BePink-La Classica at 1-10; **3 Claudia Lichtenberg** (Ger) Liv-Plantur at 1-18; **4 Carlee Taylor** (Aus) Lotto-Soudal at 2-18; **5 Tetyana Riabchenko** (Ukr) Inpa

Sottoli Giusfredi at 2-21

**6 Polona Batagelj** (Slo) BTC City Ljubljana at 2-31; **7 Jenelle Crooks** (Aus) Australia National Team at 2-56; **8 Eugenia Bujak** (Pol) BTC City Ljubljana at 3-23; **9 Brianna Walle** (USA) Optum-KBS at 3-38; **10 Jessie Daams** (Bel) Lotto-Soudal at 4-11

### Stages

**Prologue:** Amy Pieters (Ned) Liv-Plantur; **1: Lucy Garner** (GBr) Liv-Plantur; **2: Giorgia Bronzini** (Ita) Wiggle-Honda; **3: Elisa Longo Borghini** (Ita) Wiggle-Honda; **4: Loren Rowney** (Aus) Australian National Team; **5: Elisa Longo Borghini** (Ita) Wiggle-Honda; **6: Giorgia Bronzini** (Ita) Wiggle-Honda

### Open de Suede Vargarda TTT, August 21

**1 Rabo-Liv** in 52-51; **2 Velocio-SRAM** at 0-26; **3 Boels-Dolmans** at 0-29; **4 Bigla** at 0-49; **5 Wiggle-Honda** at 1-31

### Open de Suede Vargarda TTT, August 23

**1 Jolien D'Hoore** (Bel) Wiggle-Honda in 3-19-23; **2 Giorgia Bronzini** (Ita) Wiggle-Honda; **3 Lisa Brennauer** (Ger) Velocio-SRAM both at same time; **4 Lucinda Brand** (Ned) Rabo-Liv at 0-01; **5 Anna van der Breggen** (Ned) Rabo-Liv at same time

### GP de Plouay August 29

### GP de Plouay, August 29

**1 Lizzie Armitstead** (GBr) Boels-Dolmans in 3-09-26; **2 Emma Johansson** (Swe) Orica-AIS; **3 Pauline Ferrand-Prevot** (Fra) Rabo-Liv; **4 Ashleigh Moolman-Pasio** (RSA) Bigla; **5 Claudia Lichtenberg** (Ger) Liv-Plantur all at same time

### Boels Rental Ladies Tour September 1-6

#### Overall

**1 Lisa Brennauer** (Ger) Velocio-SRAM in 14-29-26; **2 Lucinda Brand** (Ned) Rabo-Liv at 0-13; **3 Ellen van Dijk** (Ned) Boels-Dol-

mans at 0-20; **4 Thalita de Jong** (Ned) Rabo-Liv at 0-23; **5 Elisa Longo Borghini** (Ita) Wiggle-Honda at 0-40; **6 Megan Guarnier** (USA) Boels-Dolmans at 0-49; **7 Amy Pieters** (Ned) Liv-Plantur at 0-52; **8 Roxane Knetemann** (Ned) Rabo-Liv at 1-10; **9 Trixi Worrack** (Ger) Velocio-SRAM at 1-27; **10 Annemiek van Vleuten** (Ned) Bigla at 1-36

### Stages

**1: Jolien D'Hoore** (Bel) Wiggle-Honda; **2: Jolien D'Hoore** (Bel) Wiggle-Honda; **3: Lauren Hall** (USA) USA National Team; **4: Lisa Brennauer** (Ger) Velocio-SRAM; **5: Lisa Brennauer** (Ger) Velocio-SRAM; **6: Thalita de Jong** (Ned) Rabo-Liv

### La Madrid Challenge by La Vuelta, September 13

**1 Shelley Olds** (USA) Ale Cipollini in 2-06-21; **2 Giorgia Bronzini** (Ita) Wiggle-Honda; **3 Kirsten Wild** (Ned) Hitec Products; **4 Roxane Fournier** (Fra) Poitou-Charentes.Futuroscope.86; **5 Lucy Garner** (GBr) Liv-Plantur all at same time

### Team Time Trial World Championships September 30

**1 Velocio-SRAM** in 47-35; **2 Boels-Dolmans** at 0-06; **3 Rabo-Liv** at 0-56; **4 Wiggle-Honda** at 1-10; **5 Twenty 16 p/b Sho Air** at 2-04

### Individual Time Trial World Championships September 22

**1 Linda Villumsen** (NZL) in 40-30; **2 Anna van der Breggen** (Ned) at 0-03; **3 Lisa Brennauer** (Ger) at 0-05; **4 Katrin Garfoot** (Aus) at 0-09; **5 Kristin Armstrong** (USA) at 0-21

### Road Race World Championships September 26

**1 Lizzie Armitstead** (GBr) in 3-23-56; **2 Anna van der Breggen** (Ned); **3 Megan Guarnier** (USA); **4 Elisa Longo Borghini** (Ita); **5 Emma Johansson** (Swe) all at same time

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*Images of  
cycling*





2007, T-Mobile training ride in Majorca before the start of the German superteam's final year. Doping scandals rocked the team in 2006 and the 2007 team would become Team High Road in 2008. This shot by Andy Jones shows Axel Merckx on the front, Roger Hammond (black hat) in the second row with Mark Cavendish directly behind.

*the*  
**PUNKS**

Pro cycling rebels  
past and present

# Graeme Obree

The deep fried mars bar to pro cycling's protein recovery drink

Words Holly Blades Photos Yuzuru Sunada



**K**nown for his contrarian style on and off two wheels, Graeme Obree was most famous for his homemade bike, Old Faithful, ingeniously cobbled together and essentially redefining bicycle aerodynamics. However, while Frankenbike played its part perfectly, breaking Francesco Moser's hour record by 445m, unfortunately the UCI played the villagers with burning torches and pitchforks. His unique crouched and 'superman' riding positions, and Old Faithful herself, were all banned from future cycling events.

It could be argued that Obree was never a 'professional' cyclist, as he was fired from his only pro-team, Le Groupement, just prior to the 1995 Tour de France for what he claimed was a refusal to contribute to the team's doping programme. While some may say an early escape from the hideous Le Groupement team strip was a boon, for a man who wore a comedy ginger-wigged tam o'shanter to the 1995 World Championships team presentation it probably wasn't as big a deal breaker as the monthly bill for strength pills.

### It worked, for him

Obree's training regime may be considered dysfunctional, or at least counter-intuitive. When training for his hour record, and concerned his muscles would seize overnight, he drank so much water he would wake every hour or so to use the bathroom and stretch his body whilst doing so. Training for the 4000m individual pursuit in Colombia consisted of mounting his turbo trainer with his track bike, intensely sprinting for five minutes, disappearing for an hour, and then repeating the process. But, if it works, it works — and it evidently did as Obree went on to take his second pursuit world title.

Obree's life has had its ups and downs, with depression and struggles with his sexuality in particular. But as a friend once commented Obree had as much chance of fitting into any organised structure as George Bush at a peace convention. But that's what makes him such an iconic, original and rebellious character in the cycling world.

### Rap Sheet

- Two banned positions and a disqualified bike
- Fired from first pro-team before his first race
- Unorthodox training methodology
- Questionable clothing
- First openly gay professional cyclist?
- Wacky Hour Records
- A Scot, born in Nuneaton...

**PUNK RATING 5/5**



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